The Escapists

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The Escapists

by whiskeyandspite

Summary

Will's cellmate said nothing, and Will didn't venture. He had been prickly enough as a lecturer, where human interaction was mandatory, and prison was not the sort of place one made friends. One either made allies or enemies, or stayed quiet enough to avoid both. Will doubted he'd be that lucky; far too easy to rile up especially when stupidity was the catalyst. Prison, Will thought absently, was similar to college.

A prison AU. Tags will update as chapters are posted.

Notes

Once upon a time, in long ago 2013, I wrote a little story called Captives. Now, that story has been adjusted, fluffed up, and given extra characters and chapters, because I am my muse's bitch, and until I write this it won't let me write anything else.

Look at the ships. Look at them. Everyone is gay. There are literally no women in this story.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Will Graham
Ex FBI Profiler for the BAU
Charge: Excessive use of force
Sentence: Two years

They had called it self defense, but Will knew better. He was very certain that when he sliced the man's head nearly clean off he had been acting on his own volition and certainly not in defense of himself. It had been somewhat premeditated, angry and very much worth the two years he had gotten in jail.

Two years.

Laughable for the crime he'd committed, but he had enough pull with the police, enough on the FBI to send the entire bureau into bankruptcy. He had been miraculously guilty only of excessive use of force - not murder, nothing more - and committed to a prison where most of the population was not put there by him.

Will collected the change of clothes he'd been issued, the bar of soap and toothbrush. All the things he'd be allowed to call his own for the next two years. It wasn't much of a change; Will had never lived particularly lavishly to begin with, despite his income. All obvious drawbacks of being incarcerated aside, he wouldn't find his lack of possessions, at least, a hindrance. What he would miss were his dogs. He hoped that Alana had managed to secure their custody.

The last thing he needed was to get out of prison and immediately end up back again on a stalking charge, hunting his dogs down one by one.

It wasn't clear whether parading new prisoners in front of riled pre-existing ones was a tradition or if the arrival of fresh meat just happened to come at a bad time. Will let the jeers and lewd suggestions meld into a white noise around him. He didn't care. He'd heard worse in consultation interviews, seen worse on crime scenes. Being a BAU agent practically guaranteed verbal sexual harassment from the dregs of society. He carried his things and kept his glasses halfway down his nose.

He knew he looked the victim. He knew he wouldn't let himself become one here. He hadn't, after all, in Baltimore.

His cell already had an occupant when he was led to it. The man was in the top bunk, one knee drawn up and a book curled in his hand, front cover bent in a curve so Will couldn't read the title. The guard informed "Lecter" of the situation, got nothing in reply, and left Will to settle in. He took the only bunk available, tossed his meagre supplies on the pillow for the moment, and sat back, letting his head rest against the cold stone wall behind him.

He missed his watch, too, he realized. He had no idea what time it was

Will's cellmate said nothing, and Will didn't venture. He had been prickly enough as a lecturer, where human interaction was mandatory, and prison was not the sort of place one made friends. One either made allies or enemies, or stayed quiet enough to avoid both. Will doubted he'd be that lucky; far too easy to rile up especially when stupidity was the catalyst. Prison, Will thought absently, was similar to college.

Several hours later, as both of them descended the echoing metal stairs to the mess hall heralded by a resounding signal, Will finally got a good look at his cellmate. The man was taller than him but not by much, with a harsh, chiselled face and dark eyes. A scar on his lip that hadn't healed clean enough suggested a prison fix up. Something about him tugged at Will's memory, but he couldn't place him. This was certainly not a case Will had worked, even if it had been handled by the FBI.

Will noticed that though Lecter appeared outwardly to be an unassuming nobody nearing retirement, he had a presence that surrounded him like an aura. People moved out of his way, some acknowledging him with a brief nod, others just disappearing as quickly as they could. Will wondered, but he didn't linger on it. It didn't matter. The man could have committed grand larceny as easily as he could have killed someone, in Will's mind. He'd seen all kinds, in his work. But if he could follow in the slipstream and pass through his sentence unbothered simply because of his cellmate, he would do it with no skin off his nose.

He didn't presume to join Lecter at his table, when he took a seat opposite a man Will thought far too striking to be in prison. Instead, he found a sparsely populated table and perched on the edge of the bench, ready to move when he had to.

The food was tasteless and felt like rubber between his teeth. This, he supposed, would be punishment enough in itself. He did his best to ignore all other calls for his attention as he ate, tensing his shoulders and convincing himself that the prickling on the back of his neck was a sensation he would grow used to. He forced himself to catalogue the gazes he felt, using it as a distraction from the anxiety rising in his throat from being in a room so full of people.

A few gazes were lustful. Some were curious. One felt like a brand against his spine. Will endured it as long as he could before casting his eyes over his shoulder to try and find its owner.

He found his eyes, after scanning a few tables, meeting Lecter's, his dark gaze curiously soothing; not the one he was looking for.

Will left the table hungry, nervous and tired; more than willing to crawl into his bunk and sleep, determining to find the library the next day and make it his permanent hideaway.

Perhaps half an hour later, the cells locked with a resounding clash of metal throughout the building, and the lights shut off moments after, throwing the place into a strange semi-twilight. Will kept his eyes to the barred window that ran the width of their door for a while, wondering how much higher it was than his eyeline when he stood, whether the privacy was for the guards or the prisoners, whether it was a gift or a curse.

A lone whine broke the quiet, and whispers followed, some amused, others annoyed at the disruption. Will turned towards the wall and crossed his arms over his middle with a sigh.

"Ignoring them will only get you so far."

Lecter's voice was rough, accented, certainly not native to the country but speaking English for long enough that the speech was fluid, easy to listen to. Will rolled to lie on his back and addressed his reply to the metal bedframe above him.

"It seems to have gotten you far enough."

There came a laugh, a single harsh sound.

"I've earned my peace," the man above him said finally, "Had the advantage of age and lack of sexual appeal on my side. For you, however, both are a disadvantage."

Will frowned, swallowing lightly enough so the other wouldn't hear. He knew what to expect in prison, he just hoped his reputation preceded him enough, or his right hook hit home enough the first time he was bothered that he could hold his own. He also clearly understood the unspoken suggestion beneath the comment.

"And I suppose you're about to generously offer protection?" he murmured, bringing a hand up to rub his eyes beneath his glasses.

Another laugh, softer, and another pause.

"Just as you are foolishly about to reject it."

Will snorted quietly. He supposed it could be worse, as the whine from beyond the door now rose in volume and evolved into a pained sobbing wail. He supposed the man could easily force these terms on him instead of offering them vaguely from the top bunk.

"Does the confidence come with a name?"

Will chewed his lip before taking a breath to reply. "Will Graham."

Another pause, another moment for Will to raise his eyes above his head and see nothing more than the wall behind him. On the bunk above, Lecter shifted, turned over.

"Good luck, Will Graham."

By the end of the first week, Will was reconsidering his refusal.

The very first day he and his cellmate left together, Will learned his full name. Hannibal Lecter. Hannibal the Cannibal. He was surprised it hadn't clicked earlier. The arrest was years before Will's time at the BAU, and he had never had to study the case in particular, but he had followed it on the news as an undergrad. The circular trials that became mistrials, the lack of evidence that helped muddy the waters and create the myth that was Lecter.

They were similar, he realized, in that the time they were serving did not at all reflect the crimes they'd committed.

Allegedly.

Hannibal, he learned, wasted no words and rarely spoke first. Outside of the man he ate with - Lecter's opposite in personality, from what Will could tell - he sought no other company. Will realized that their short exchange had been not only lucrative but also incredibly unusual; he doubted that offer had been made to others here. He wondered if it was because they shared a cell, or because there was something about Will that Lecter particularly liked.

Because Hannibal's prediction had, inevitably, come true. Will's appearance drew attention he didn't welcome, and though Will had scabs on his knuckles within the day, he hadn't managed to project the stoic image he'd hoped would cloak him.

But rape in prison was rarely about desire.

Rape was about power, the ability to assert oneself over another person, or over a group of them. Rape was a means of control, and currency.

Those who were bigger, heavier, more imposing either struck out alone, or gathered themselves a following of those just strong enough to not be the weakest. Those who were clever, collected packs. Some packs contented themselves with internal hierarchy, rarely recruited. Some packs campaigned as though running for national assembly.

Some packs just hunted.

Three had targeted Will.

He had refused to bend to the Aryans. Found that his name was - unfortunately but unsurprisingly - known to the Russian mob.

And then there was Muskrat Farm, through which all contraband passed before third parties took to distribution within the prison. All members reaped the benefits; the youngest enjoyed the drugs, while the older enjoyed the youngest. Pretty things were always in demand, and refusing to join, once you were sighted, wasn't an option.

Will had refused.

For several nights after he'd been cornered in the hallway just off the chapel, he'd slept with his back firmly against the cold wall behind him. Attempting to seclude himself in his cell had proven equally as futile; as soon as Hannibal went on his way, whatever veneer of safety had cloaked the doorway vanished with him.

He found he'd rather be rushed in a public corridor than his own room.

After that day, Will slept on the floor for a while.

And still pride kept him silent, made him suffer sleepless nights until his hands shook and his vision split and he found himself at the mercy of yet another pack, this time in the showers.

Always a walking testament to the resilience of the human body, Will hadn't lost consciousness. He'd almost drowned in two inches of water on the floor until one of them had the idea to shove him up against a wall instead. He hadn't lost consciousness then either.

When Will retreated to his cell, he found Hannibal in conversation with his friend; he at the table, the other leaning back against the wall beside. Both turned to regard him when he came in, no mystery as to what had happened. Hannibal's companion clicked his tongue sympathetically, eyes flicking over the mosaic of bruises darkening on Will's face. Hannibal said nothing.

Will considered postponing. Asking in the safety and quiet of their locked nighttime cell. But he could feel his pulse in every cut and graze on his skin. He hadn't slept in four days.

"It's getting harder to find a place to sit without being bothered." he said softly.

Will knew that Hannibal hadn't been blind to his plight, no one had. He'd watched, curious, as Will had tried to establish himself. Had seen the fight behind the temper. Had seen the cleverness behind the sarcasm and snark. He'd also seen Will stumble back to bed, had heard his hitched, pained breathing at night, as he squirmed back against the cold wall and shivered.

And he had done nothing.

"Anywhere you sit will bother you right now." The accent caught Will off-guard. British. Proper.

"Anthony."

Hannibal's companion snorted, a sound far from lighthearted amusement, and turned away. Will swallowed, eyes still on Lecter. At length, he replied.

"Perhaps you should look elsewhere."

Will noted the immediate displeasure of his partner - Anthony - at the response, and Hannibal's cool gaze in answer. Noted the way Anthony stared Hannibal down until the other looked away.

"Go see Jimmy." Anthony said, eyes on Hannibal a moment more, as though to hold him in place, before turning back to Will.

Will swallowed thickly, shook his head with a helpless laugh and set his jaw.

"I've seen enough people today."

He didn't look at either of them as he ducked to sit on his bunk, knew they heard the pained gasp as he drew his knees to his stomach and turned his back to the two of them, defiant.

It felt like an age before they resumed their conversation - in French, which amused him - and he felt a pang of something he refused to identify in listening to how their voices moved together. Obvious years of friendship between them, bad business deals, drunk evenings; unfinished sentences that were quickly taken up as segues to seemingly unrelated topics. Will

understood less than half of what they said but it didn’t matter. It wasn’t for him. And he was asleep before they stopped talking anyway.

Desperation became quite the motivator.

Once Will lost his hope of possible protection he turned to other means. He was capable, clever, just not wont to use his particular set of skills. He'd gotten very lucky with the self defense charge, he doubted fortune will smile as favourably on him again, especially inside.

With careful manipulation, certain fights started near him, not over him. Deliberate positioning kept a wall or window at his back any time he stood still. Strategy, where strength had failed.

But one visit to the infirmary became three. He got to meet Jimmy, incidentally an ex-classmate of Will’s closest friend in the science division back in Quantico. Two degrees of separation bartered him a couple of cigarettes and the name of a guy who could give him more if Will smuggled an ampule of morphine back.

That particular stunt landed him in solitary confinement. Which Will endured in amused silence as the packs so set on taking him apart grew simultaneously more eager and possessive, each wanting their pound of flesh. Someone started taking bets.

Released from solitary, Will returned to his cell with as much pride as he could manage. Hannibal greeted him with nothing more than the sound of a page turning in his book, Will responded with nothing more than to casually slide into his bunk and doze. That evening, he found Jimmy’s contact, Brian, and palmed him the second ampule he’d kept when the decoy had been found on him.

Two packs of cigarettes, and attention of a different sort; the Aryans refused to fuck with their long-term supplier over a white guy who ultimately didn’t matter. Unspoken truce, and the nicotine helped Will sleep.

Win-win.

As time passed, and Will accumulated more bruises and a three-a-day habit, so Hannibal started paying him more attention. Whatever he had assumed Will would do, after being refused, he had not done. Instead, he’d elevated himself in the man’s eyes to something interesting.

It began as an unusual courtship, careful, subtle, but one regardless, and this time Will did not let his pride control him. Contraband food - wrapped in wax paper - appeared on Will’s bed, on days he couldn’t stomach the meal in the mess hall. An empty notebook and pencil. Books; Plato, Tolstoy, old law textbooks and tatty copies of science fiction. Books that Will knew were Hannibal’s own, not from the library. Books he took care to wrap up in the wax paper to avoid damaging them as he read.

Weeks became months. The Aryans had backed off, but the Russians caught Will outside the laundry room with a makeshift shank, sharp enough to assure several days in the infirmary, too blunt to sever the muscle protecting his carotid artery.

But it was another day, in another shower, when Will found himself pinned down by three and threatened by another. Higher management, apparently. His struggles left foreign blood under his nails and his own between his teeth, but Will didn't give the Farm the satisfaction of pulling a sound from him, just grunts of pain and breathless struggling. Bruises and bone-deep ache.

He returned to his cell angry and close to defeated. At least his limp this time wasn't from someone pushing roughly into him hard enough to bleed; he'd managed to struggle long enough for a guard to come by on his rounds and disperse them. Tomorrow he might not be so lucky.

In truth, he was getting close to his limit; he didn't know if he could keep up the fight much longer, alone.

Hannibal set his book against his lap when he saw Will, let his eyes take in the dripping hair he hadn't bothered to dry, the bags under his eyes, the mouth set in a firm line that was juxtaposed with the way his brows furrowed. An expression close to the one he had worn weeks ago when Will had come to him asking, and Hannibal had sent him on his way.

Surely, by now, Will had paid his dues.

Will felt Hannibal's eyes on him and looked up. He managed to harden his gaze for a moment, one brief final act of defiance before it melted into something else, something more vulnerable. With a sigh, Will turned and shoved his back against the wall. He didn't move to slide into his own bed, did not move to leave the cell. It was as willing an invitation as Will knew he could offer, with the general population across the mezzanine in their own cells or in the mess, finishing their dinner.

This time Hannibal did not ignore him.

He slid off the bunk, landing cat-silent and close enough to Will for the other to attempt to shift out of the way to accommodate. His shoulders straightened, his spine aligned perfectly to set him just shorter of Hannibal himself when he met his eyes again.

Will exhaled, a deliberate thing, before carefully, eyes growing hooded from the movement, lifting his chin to present his throat.

Hannibal made a sound so low it was more a vibration. Predatory, powerful, relishing the delicious submission offered willingly by someone who had been so adamant to remain alive on his own. Hannibal moved closer, a motion almost reptilian, fast enough to draw Will's lips back from his teeth, but no arms came up to push him away. Will remained prone.

Hannibal breathed in the pain he radiated. The exhaustion. His blood, and others'. It was intoxicating.

“Remarkable thing,” Hannibal murmured, watching Will’s throat work as he swallowed. “Will you listen?”

Will you obey me? Bend to me? Submit?

Hannibal brought his hand up to draw his knuckles down the line of Will’s zipper, from collarbone to navel, pressed gently nearer when Will sucked in his stomach.

“Will you?” Will replied.

Hannibal’s delight was palpable. He drew his knuckles up again, moving higher, skimming Will’s pulse with his thumb.

“Brave boy.” He would train Will to his hand. Would set about teaching him to associate his touch with pleasure. “Your voice is the last thing I want to take from you.” he would hear it pull taut and tremble. He would hear it echo for others to envy.

He set the side of his finger to the sharp bend of Will’s jaw, turned his face towards the open door. Will’s cheeks heated, teeth worrying against the inside of his lip. Hannibal ducked his head to whisper against him.

“Ownership without balance is destructive,” he breathed, drawing his nose against Will’s skin, looking past him out of their cell. A few inmates had stopped to watch, amused. Curious. “I want your honesty. I will give you mine. You want my protection. You’ll have it.”

“And the rest?”

“Quid pro quo. As it comes.”

Will swallowed again, allowed the words to settle against him, gave himself a moment to think. More were watching, now, and Will’s stomach felt like it was filled with lead.

He should have waited. He should have just held on a few hours until -

“Fine,” he breathed. “How?”

Hannibal turned his head just enough to set his lips to Will’s neck, fingers tightening where they held him when Will tensed, shifted.

“Moan,” he said, before pressing his lips, his teeth, harder against the presented willing skin.

Will hated the undeniable response of his body, hated how simple this was, how immediately effective. Already enough men were whistling, clapping, calling snide invitations to the two of them. Already they, at least, were witness to the bargain struck. His breath hitched, cheeks burning, heart hammering against his ribs. Will felt the rush of it, the familiar whisper of the pendulum in his mind as he reached up to grasp against Hannibal’s arm, as he tilted his head back further, closed his eyes to the humiliation, the judgement, the consequences -

- and moaned.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

It was said that Matty Brown could walk through walls.

Chapter Notes

An introduction to some of the other inmates we'll meet in this story. And our murder frenemies get a little closer.

Matthew Brown
Professional gentleman thief
Charge: Two counts of criminal mischief, two counts of armed robbery without a deadly weapon, two counts of grand theft in the first degree, resisting arrest, assault upon a police vehicle
Sentence: Twelve years

A lot was said about Matthew Brown, enough that he had long ago stopped listening to any of it. It didn't matter what people said or didn't, believed or didn't, as long as they didn't get up in his face about it.

It was said that Matty Brown was an illegitimate son of one of New York's most powerful mob families. He never confirmed or denied this; he'd never known his dad. He'd grown up poor in a rough part of town, the only man in a household of six siblings and an endless parade of deadbeat would-be-dads.

His mum had done her best, Matty had picked up the slack.

Sometimes he'd get the occasional backhand from her then-boyfriend for mouthing off, but that did little to tame him; instead, it gave him quick reflexes and an eye for choreographing a fight. His first street fight left him with a fractured eye socket and a reputation for getting back up again. His second scored him two hundred bucks. Matty would fight anyone over anything, as long as the betting pool was hot. The only thing he couldn't stand, was violence directed at women.

He'd fight those assholes for free.

It was said that Matty Brown got his first tattoo at age ten, a stick-and-poke under the desk during fifth period history. If that was true, it was most likely the one on his left middle finger: an outline of a swallow.

Matt enjoyed getting inked, and enjoyed showing it off. He'd arrived in prison with an enviable collection, and had been very selective about what he added while inside. He had no gang affiliations, no slogans, no cruelties. He had swirling coils off one shoulder, circular saw blades on either side of his abs, solid black cuffs of varying thicknesses on his right arm. He enjoyed the concept of using his body as a canvas, both for scars and for art. He took very good care of himself.

It was said that Matty Brown could walk through walls.

If that were true, he had never walked through the walls of this prison. He'd not really had the need. Routine suited Matthew; scheduled meals, access to exercise equipment, undisturbed showers - most of the time. He'd shared his bedroom with two sisters growing up, so having just one cellmate was almost an upgrade.

He seemed contented to serve his time, charm the parole board, and return to the life of a gentleman thief upon release. So long as he didn't serve it alone.

"He fucking *what?*"

"Transferred," the guard repeated, glancing up at Matt a moment more before crossing his arms and turning his head to the side again. "Somewhere down south where it's warmer. Said it was for his health."

Matt snorted, shook his head. He had enough energy to power the entire prison in that moment, anger and humiliation burning through his skin like acid.

"You know that's bullshit, Terry, you know that."

"Brown, I'm just here til something better comes along." The guard replied. "I didn't put the damn transfer in, just got told about it at shift change."

Matt swore, loud enough to draw a few looks his way, and kicked the wall by the guard's feet with a snarl. He ignored the indignant yell from the man and turned to walk away. He couldn't be around people right then, he was liable to beat any breathing thing within a mile radius of himself into a pulp.

Fucker.

Absolute fucking coward. Playing the health card because he'd had low fucking blood iron as a kid. He'd been a useless partner, too. Shit for brains and apparently shit for eyes since his lookout skills had landed them both in the clink. And now a transfer, because daddy could pay for a big bad lawyer to get his ass down to goddamn Daytona.

Something beneath his feet gave enough to make him stumble, and Matt shoved his hands hard enough against the wall for the slap to echo. It wasn't enough. It wasn't nearly enough.

So he curled his fingers into his palm and punched the wall instead. Once. Twice. Again. Again. Until every brick had his partner's name on it and every single one of them deserved to be battered to dust.

It took three guards to wrangle him enough to get him out of the mess hall. They knew better than to tase him into submission by now. Matt glared ahead, putting one foot in front of the other only because it would be humiliating to be carried out. Out the corner of his eye he saw one of the new inmates - glasses, tangled curls, a face that without stubble wouldn't look out of place in a high school - and met his eyes with a raised brow.

"Take a photo, it'll last longer."

The guy just blinked at him, raised a brow of his own. Matt swore at him.

"Find something else to look at."

Interruptions were common enough, but rarely did anything bring the entire common area to a halt. This, however, seemed to. Will could still hear the guy cursing everything and anything to high bloody heaven as he was led down the corridor, but didn't turn to watch him go. Instead, he watched the gathered prisoners, catalogued their reactions.

Horror, panic, concern, delight.

He rolled the piece of gum in his mouth to the other side and worked his jaw to start chewing again.

Will felt eyes on him and immediately raised them to the balcony where Hannibal watched the scene unfold, wrists crossed over the railing. He watched Will long enough that the other frowned, just the mere hint of shadow between his brows before he looked away. Staring any longer would bring heat to his cheeks and that was the last thing he needed today.

After their bargain was struck, things had continued surprisingly civilly. Will hadn't immediately been bent over his bunk when lights went out for the night. He hadn't woken to anyone looming over him in his bed the next morning.

Nothing.

Almost as though having submitted to the man, he was no longer interesting to him.

The day after, however, he'd caught Hannibal's eyes in the mirror, admiring the bruise he'd sucked into Will's skin, high enough that no collar would cover it. He'd felt the man's eyes on him all day, though Hannibal never once crowded him or overtly followed him at all. Will thought back to his first evening, when gazes had seared him, and Hannibal's had soothed him. Strangely, that hadn't changed since their bargain either; he found - to his chagrin - that he enjoyed being looked at and seen by him.

That had been yesterday.

Now, Will felt a tug to return upstairs, for no other reason that he could explain beyond the fact that *Hannibal wanted him to.* He glanced up again, saw Hannibal tilt his head in

consideration. A predator's appraisal. He kept his eyes on Will as he straightened, hands on the railing, before turning away to step into their room.

Will pressed his gum against the back of his teeth and tapped his fingers to the table. In reality, he had nothing better to do. They hadn't been assigned jobs yet, the new arrivals, since rotation had changed the week before, and he imagined that even if he went to the library now he would almost immediately return again. His feet would inevitably lead him upstairs anyway.

So Will went. Hands shoved into the pockets of his jumpsuit, its sleeves wrapped around his waist like a belt. He deliberately walked the spiral steps, didn't jog up them as he normally would, and he didn't knock when he entered the cell.

Why should he? He lived there too.

"Must you chew that?"

Will blinked. "Most people tend to prefer it over the stale cigarette smell."

Hannibal watched him carefully, sat at the table in front of a lidded wooden box. He watched until Will felt that tug again, that cloying need to change something to feel approval in those eyes instead. It infuriated him.

He took the two steps needed and bent to spit the gum into the toilet before straightening.

"Cigarettes aren't going in there, if you complain about them next."

"You've quite a lucrative trade going, with those, I would hate for you to be unable to enjoy the fruits of your labor," Hannibal replied, genial. "Take a seat, Will."

A moment of hesitation before Will did, stepping back and lowering himself onto his bunk, hands still in his pockets. At the table, Hannibal took the lid off the box in front of him and reached in. Will regarded the wooden-handled brush and bowl that Hannibal set out, the towel he added from its hook on the wall above the sink.

"What's this about?"

"Aesthetics," Hannibal said, turning to look at Will over his shoulder a moment. "I can't have you looking like you just crawled out of the bayou and into my company."

Will bristled, just enough to raise his shoulders, but said nothing. He looked, instead, at the last item Hannibal took from the box to set to the table.

It had been a comb once, one of those cheap plastic things you could get for twenty-five cents at the corner store. But now the teeth had been melted together, other pieces of plastic added and smoothed into a flat plane, the edge carefully sharpened. It was unmistakable what it was for in here, and Will's eyes immediately went to the door.

"I'd prefer if you sit here, if you don't mind," Hannibal said, standing to offer his seat to Will. "The light falls better."

“If someone finds that -”

“They never do,” Hannibal smiled, tilted his head again when Will didn’t move to his seat. “But I would prefer to have finished with it before the guards make their rounds.”

Will’s swallow felt thick in his ears. It hadn’t been that long ago something similar had been used on him to try and end his life.

“You want to shave me?”

“I’m going to shave you,” Hannibal amended, turning to him. “Because I enjoy beautiful things, and have standards for the company I keep. Move, Will.”

He hesitated a moment more before obeying, sitting heavily in the seat and pushing his shoulders up against his ears. He couldn’t argue that since arriving in prison he’d let his hair grow wild, but grooming had hardly been on his list of priorities. He watched Hannibal take a bottle from the shelf above the sink, pour from it into the bowl and work up a lather with the brush.

It was surreal, seeing such well-loved grooming tools in prison, capable hands using them. He looked up when Hannibal stepped in front of him, and slowly drew his shoulders back. The other hummed his approval and bent to brush the foam over Will’s face.

There was no other word for this but intimate. Hannibal stood as near to Will as he had the day he’d kissed his neck and bitten his claim into it, and touched him just as little as he had then. By proxy of the brush, the towel, the deadly-looking straight razor he’d fashioned. When he set the side of his finger to Will’s chin to lift it, Will nearly groaned.

“There is a ritual inherent to building one’s outward appearance,” Hannibal murmured after a while, eyes focused on the swath of skin he was shaving, surprisingly gentle. “A thing close to armor, if you will, against those around you.”

Will hummed, met Hannibal’s eyes when he looked up, but said nothing.

“You keep company with me, and I abhor laziness. Scruffiness. Deliberate lack of effort put into any aspect of your life. You must take pride in yourself and your appearance.” Hannibal brought the towel up to pat away the remaining soap against Will’s throat. “That includes how you wear your uniform.”

Will swallowed, felt his lips twitch as he tried to hold back a smile.

“You want me to take pride in my jumpsuit?”

“I want you to draw eyes when you move through any space you’re in,” Hannibal replied, wiping the plastic blade before tilting Will’s face up to him again. “I want those eyes to admire, and want, and understand that you are not theirs to have.”

“Seems like that’s tempting fate.”

“Do you not trust in my ability to protect you?”

Will opened his mouth to answer but didn't say anything. He didn't know what to say.

"I don't trust anyone," he admitted after a while, before obediently closing his lips so Hannibal could draw the sharp plastic beneath his nose.

"You will." came the quiet reply.

For long minutes they were silent, just the scrape of shank to skin as Hannibal removed as much of Will's unruly beard as he could. It wasn't, after all, a straight razor. It would not offer a clean shave. But it was enough to bring Will's appearance back closer to how he'd carried himself into this place. Enough to return some of that sharp confidence to him.

He was almost finished, Will's head turned to the side so he could carve away the hair on his jaw, when Will finally sighed and let himself relax a little. He concentrated on the sensations, the cool soap and unyielding plastic, the way Hannibal's breath was even and slow, the heat of his fingers over Will's bared skin.

He turned his face minutely, just enough to feel Hannibal's palm press to his cheek, and met his eyes when Hannibal looked askance. A moment, another, and Hannibal brought his thumb up to draw over Will's bottom lip, just once, comb held away from his skin so as not to cut him.

Will let him touch, parted his lips for Hannibal to feel his breath. It had been a long time since Will had had any kind of welcome human contact. He hadn't ever been particularly physical, but every human ached for a kind touch once in a while. Something soft. Something just like this that Will could close his eyes and press into.

He swallowed, closed his mouth, and caught the tip of Hannibal's thumb between his lips before it was pulled free. Without a word, Hannibal brought up the towel to wipe away the last of the lather, eyes never leaving his. When he bent next it was to bury his nose in the warm curls, breathing Will into him, the scent of his own soap mixed in entirely intoxicating.

He stepped no nearer than where he'd stood as he'd shaved Will, he didn't reach with his other hand to pull him closer; there was no need. Will turned into the palm holding him, arched up to feel Hannibal against him. Another submission, just as telling as his first had been. Hannibal let his hand travel up to Will's hair, relished in the way Will turned his face into his pulse instead, eyes closing.

Oh, but he was lovely.

"Is it still considered pornography if nothing sexual is happening?"

Will made a sound, sharp and surprised, and sat back from where he'd nearly draped himself over Hannibal. The other didn't respond quite so overtly; just straightened his shoulders with a sigh.

"The imagination is a powerful thing."

"Ain't that the truth. Am I interrupting?"

Anthony stood in the doorway, shoulder against the door and arms loosely crossed over his middle. He raised an eyebrow at Will when he continued to stare at him and the other looked away immediately, to Anthony's great amusement.

"Just finishing up."

"You've made him look like a teenager," Anthony commented, glancing at Hannibal when he finally turned to him. "Not sending the boy out to the Farm already?"

"I was going to take him to dinner."

"I thought we had a standing reservation," Anthony grinned, finally pushing himself to stand and entering the cell. He seemed to care little for how small the space was for three. Will watched as Hannibal's expression softened, a hint of that friendly rapport the two had held returning between them. He suddenly felt like he wanted to be anywhere other than here.

"There's been a curious development."

Hannibal glanced at Will, who by this point had stood up from the table and pressed himself to the wall again. It wasn't fear, Will had very rarely shown fear, even when under extreme stress. It was something far gentler than that. When he looked at Anthony again, the other smiled.

"You owe me a game of chess," Hannibal reminded him. "And you hold the board, having won last time."

"So I do." Another look to Will, Anthony's nose wrinkling in amusement, before he turned to leave again, Hannibal following a few steps behind. His look to Will lingered a little longer, assessing his own work before allowing his eyes to trace lower; down to the knot of sleeves at Will's waist, lower still. When he met Will's eyes again, the other's were searing.

Something to explore later that evening, perhaps.

Anthony shared a cell with no one, officially. No bunks, just a single bedframe. The layout very similar to that of Hannibal's, with the exception of the piles and piles of books that lined most of the walls from floor to just below the ceiling. Anthony immediately reached for his cigarettes and the matches when he came in.

"You heard about Brown?"

"I heard him," Hannibal replied, declining the pack when it was offered. "But that's hardly a turn of events."

"The unexpected transfer of his partner to a more lenient state-run facility is," Anthony countered, blowing a plume of smoke towards the ceiling. He watched Hannibal's face a moment, thumbing the cigarette's filter before putting it in his mouth again. "One of yours?"

Hannibal shook his head. "Nothing to do with me."

The other nodded, resting his hip against the table as he looked out beyond the door. Hannibal sat on the bed and watched him.

“Brown was here, once he'd beaten his anger to submission in the gym. Hot-headed thing, but clever. Was curious about favors.”

“And he came to you?” Hannibal asked, smile quirking his lips. Anthony just blinked at him, feigning shock.

“That’s what I asked,” he agreed. He ashed his cigarette into a mug and continued. “But like I said. Clever. He wanted to know about the layout beneath the prison. The passages, old rail lines.”

“Surprised he even knows about them. A bit before his time,”

“Quite,” Anthony’s eyes narrowed in a smile. “It did get me reminiscing, though.”

“He’s running on anger. His only thought right now is to get out of here and go for his partner.”

“I don’t blame him,” Anthony murmured. “I’d have your ass if you pulled that kind of stunt on me. He’ll go with or without help, eventually.”

“He can’t go if he doesn’t know *where* to go.” Hannibal reasoned, raising a brow when Anthony looked at him. “Even if he can walk through walls.”

Anthony just continued smoking, allowing it to coil in his mouth before breathing it out towards the door. It was meditive to watch, a long-ago built self-soothing mechanism. Hannibal didn’t interrupt him. When he was finished, Anthony moved to sit next to Hannibal, shoulder to shoulder.

“Walls are one thing, steel is another,” he said quietly. “If he wants the old tunnels, he needs the sewer line. Drains.”

“Kitchen?”

Anthony shook his head. “Wrong side of the prison for where he wants to end up. Showers.”

Hannibal considered, eyes studying the wall opposite them as his palms drew together in slow circles.

“Showers drain into the pipes above the laundry,” he said finally. “Just one floor below.”

Anthony hummed, stretched out his legs and crossed his ankles. “The laundry houses the industrial dryers,” he continued. “The air vents of which follow parallel the sewer line to the main drainage reservoir.”

They sat still a moment, before Hannibal turned to him. Anthony didn’t look back.

“Are you considering granting a favor?”

“I don’t do favors,” Anthony replied, shrugging and flicking his hair from his face. “I just work here. But I’ve been curious for a few years now, how long a standing reservation is held before it’s wiped off the books.”

“Dinner?”

“Dessert,” Anthony replied, narrowing his eyes. “Every second Friday.”

"We never missed it, for a decade,"

"And then stopped going, for just as long." Anthony chewed the inside of his lip, eyes glazed with the past for a moment before blinking himself back to Hannibal. "Would be nice to have a proper fucking meal again. I'd kill for a crème brulé."

"Inadvisable," Hannibal told him, smile narrowing his eyes as the other snorted.

"What could they possibly do to me? Pile on another life sentence?"

Hannibal considered him a moment more before leaning to press a kiss to his temple. “Tomorrow, then,” he said, standing. “Dominoes in the mess. Unless he has something better to do."

Anthony watched his friend go, following him until he turned out of his line of sight. Then he reached for his cigarettes.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will said nothing, waited until Hannibal's eyes found him - shoulders against the wall beside their bunks, the only corner of the room not visible with the door open - and raised his chin with a smile.

"Watch." He said.

And Hannibal did.

The plan starts to take shape, and Will and Hannibal... well.

Anthony Dimmond
Ex lecturer at Cambridge; published author
Charge: sixteen counts of forgery - felony in the first degree, ten counts of forgery with intent to distribute forged bonds, eight counts of forgery with intent to distribute forged government records, eight counts of forgery with intent to distribute forged manuscripts, six counts of money laundering and concealment, six counts of tax evasion (three dismissed due to lack of evidence), two counts of identity theft.
Sentence: Life without parole

Anthony Dimmond did not believe in bad luck.

He believed in shitty circumstances, unfortunate turns of events, disloyal people, and the power-hungry. It was those, after all, that had landed him in jail, not luck - good or bad. He had done what he had done because he'd found it interesting. His talents had led him to unsavory associations, lucrative opportunities, and just enough danger to keep boredom at bay.

After all, what had he done but adapted his handwriting - he'd not killed anyone.

Someone needed a passport, to wipe away inconvenient debts, to appear more powerful, to appear more monied; someone else needed a foot in the door of the art world, to dazzle collectors, to present his prized possessions at auction. Anthony needed a good fountain pen, expensive oils and a good fuck.

Win-win.

The irony of his entire criminal career, was that he couldn't take pride in his work outwardly. He existed in the shadows, his work eased the way for those walking above ground. When he

had been asked to submit a plea, he'd calmly proclaimed his innocence. The weight of proof rested on the prosecution. A forger was a tool, he was not a kingpin.

Anthony had always been good at his work. He'd gotten life in prison because his good work had been used poorly.

Behind bars, Anthony had found a world just as hungry for his skills, and just as willing to pay for them. The beauty of forgery was that when done properly, all trace of the criminal was missing. A document was just a document. A cheque was just a cheque.

Signatures became autographs.

Favors populated his cell with books and his bed with whoever felt like joining him. Talent allowed him the freedom from associations with gangs, packs, or cults and a guarantee of safety from molestation.

Anthony's favourite cigarettes saw a bump in federal funding for the prison; untraceable yet entirely legitimate were anyone to check. An individual cell granted higher management signed invitations to exclusive parties.

Tit for tat.

Give and take.

Anthony and Hannibal's lives had crossed much earlier, as Anthony had been incarcerated first, and their reunion in such a low security prison secured through swift penstrokes and an official stamp.

A surprisingly easy way to assure a relatively quiet retirement for the two of them, until such a time as either or both got itchy feet once more. Or someone interesting tugged at the nostalgia within them.

"Could you be any more queer?" Matthew sat hunched at the table, hood up over his head and one foot tapping rhythmically against the floor. Anthony took his time languidly pulling a ChupaChup from his mouth before pointing with it.

"Yes. Would you like the list alphabetically?"

"We haven't the time," Hannibal interrupted, casting a look to Anthony before setting a domino to the tabletop between them. "There are two ways out of this prison."

"Three," Anthony said. "If you count a body bag."

"What's the first?" Matt asked.

"Front door," Hannibal told him. "Three gates, two guards, surrounding wall."

"Impossible," Matt hummed. "New locks on those, two-key requirement, each carried by a different guard…"

“And here I thought you could walk through walls,” Anthony drawled, brow rising as Matt fixed him with a glare.

“I’m a thief, not a magician.”

“The second,” Hannibal interrupted, with a pointed slap of a domino tile to the table. “Is underground. Drains. Air vents.”

“Locks?”

“Just the one. Industrial dryer in the laundry.”

“What kind?”

“Old school, it’s hardly in their budget to upgrade every lock.”

Matthew nodded, tongued his top lip for a moment. “Where does that lead?”

“To the main reservoir,” Anthony replied, fiddling with a domino before setting that down against one of Hannibal’s. “Deep vat that fills and drains on a fixed schedule. Doors along the bottom lead out to older sewers.” he sat up straighter, grabbed a few more pieces to help illustrate the passage as he spoke. “Past those, electrical lines and the railway. Unused stations that were meant to work as storage in the sixties before budget cuts saw the whole project collapse.”

“How do you know this?”

“Because I shovelled shit down there for eight years,” Anthony replied, tonguing the candy to the side of his mouth. “Before that project was scrapped, too. We got as far as the rails.”

“And after that?”

Hannibal shrugged. “Tunnels. We’re about eighteen miles from the nearest small town large enough for its own train station.”

Matthew swallowed, nodded, considered the rudimentary map Anthony had fashioned with the domino pieces before swiping them into a pile.

“How do we get to the laundry? Everything’s on timer lock after lights out. I can’t override that.”

“Showers are just above the laundry,” Anthony mused, resting his forehead against his palm as he watched Matthew frown again.

“Locked just as fucking tight as the floor below.”

“When’s the last time you gave confession?” Hannibal asked him suddenly, drawing Matt’s eyes up in surprise. “Nothing in that room worth stealing. A simple door, a simple lock.”

“And its key?”

“Single,” Hannibal confirmed. “Left in the door until it needs locking again.”

Matt hummed, nodded. “And then?”

“Confessional,” Hannibal said. “Boards in the left wall are loose. Flaking plaster, won’t take much more than a scrape to loosen it. Beyond that, the showers.”

“Right,” Matt sat back, fiddling with a couple of dominoes to give his hands something to do. He didn’t look at Hannibal or Anthony for a long time before finally setting a piece balancing upright to the center of the table.

“Get me the chapel key. I’ll get the rest.”

“How do you propose to cut through steel?” Anthony asked him, setting his teeth to bite against the hard candy when Matt leveled a glare on him.

“I’ll handle it.”

Anthony continued watching him, long enough for Matt to curse and turn aside again, hood blocking his peripheral vision of the man next to him. A few moments more and he stood up to leave entirely, hands in his pockets, beelining for the gym.

“Cocky bastard.”

“Must you antagonize him?”

“He fascinates me,” Anthony admitted, tossing the plastic stick from his sweet to the table absently. “Besides, a fuck would be *far* more effective in freeing him from that tension that constantly suffocates him.”

“You get enough already.”

“Not as much as I’d like,” Anthony grinned, before clearing his expression and sorting the dominoes into rows before him. “We need tools, Hannibal. Things to pick with, things to dig with. Secure plastic to carry changes of clothes through the reservoir. Matches. Torches.”

“Why?”

“Once we’re in those sewers the sound carries, we can’t even whisper without distortion amplifying the noise. And it’s dark as hell down there, we need light.”

Hannibal nodded, let the words sink in, let the beginning of their tenuous plan evolve into something achievable.

“How long would we be down there?”

“First trains run at five,” Anthony said. “Lights out here at nine, we’d have less than five minutes before our absences were noticed and the alarm blew and brought the cavalry. We need to be in the laundry by then.”

Hannibal nodded. “Vents?”

“Ten minute crawl without obstacles.” Anthony told him. “Five to climb down into the reservoir. We can only hope to hell it doesn’t rain.”

Hannibal lifted a brow. Anthony chewed his lip in thought a moment.

“It drains twice daily. Once the evening sewage is gone, the reservoir is closed off. If it rains, water will accumulate fast. If we can’t find that door before it’s underwater -”

“Hmm.”

Anthony took a deep breath, shrugged. “From there it would depend on how well we can see, if there's rubble or other obstacles. It’s about two miles before we hit the rails. From there, sixteen to the nearest station, give or take.” he glanced up at his friend, eyes narrowed. “At least, when I was down there last.”

Hannibal watched Anthony turn the dominoes number-side down, one after the other, until they all lay anonymous before them and Anthony crossed his arms again.

“Which of your aliases is still clean?” He asked, glancing up at Hannibal again. “And will you stay stateside?”

Hannibal shook his head. “I’ll need another, and time to get my things in order before I move.”

“Easy,” Anthony wrinkled his nose before casting his eyes higher, towards the balconies. He hummed, looking back at Hannibal. “I charge extra for carry-on luggage.”

“There won’t be any.”

“Won’t there?” Anthony watched Hannibal a moment more before standing, bending to sweep the dominoes into their box. “Lying’s a sin, Hannibal, best go confess it.”

“How am I so fond of you when you are inconceivably rude to me?” Hannibal asked, getting just a wink in reply.

Will hadn’t slept well. He’d woken at some ungodly hour of the night and found himself aching for relief, a murky dream filled with heated words and sweaty forms still clinging to his eyelids.

He’d taken care of it roughly, pants around his ankles to avoid making sound as his wrist twisted his cock and drew back the foreskin over and over until he’d come.

As Will lay there, body throbbing in pleasant release, he’d considered the form above him. He knew Hannibal wasn’t asleep. He’d grown used to hearing his breathing and cataloguing his shifting on the nights he’d pressed cold against the wall, sleepless. Will knew that he’d heard.

He wondered if Hannibal's hand still tickled with the vestigial scrape of stubble, just as Will's face still burned from Hannibal's touch. He wondered if Hannibal had thought of him, after, was thinking of him, now.

Will made a quiet sound, just a hum, before shuffling back into his clothes and turning to his side.

He didn't get a response before he fell asleep, though he hardly expected one.

In the morning he'd joined Hannibal and Anthony at their table for breakfast. Company was easier when no one was fully awake. The coffee was terrible. Anthony casually stole bacon from the both of them, wrapping it in cloth, seemingly for later. They'd eaten mostly in silence, Will's mind still swirling with pleasant memories, body comfortably lax from that release. Will wanted more, his skin ached for it. But he had scars still healing from the last assault he'd suffered, and the thought of anyone touching him -

He stood as Hannibal did, moved as he moved, followed as he led. He was tangled entirely in the narrative of his mind palace, entirely unaware of his surroundings until they were in their cell and Hannibal was in his space and Will couldn't seem to draw a breath properly.

"Honesty, Will," Hannibal murmured, the tone of a disappointed teacher curling his vowels, hands on either side of Will's head to bracket him against the wall. There was ample room for the other to slip free, should he wish. Both knew he wouldn't. "When you took your pleasure beneath me, last night, instead of seeking me out, did you think of me?"

Will swallowed, a thick and heavy thing, and considered the man in front of him.

He'd been awake. He'd heard. He'd liked it.

Good.

There was no advantage to lying.

"Yes," he whispered. His eyes flicked across Hannibal's face, seeking for anger, for displeasure, and found none. Just a soft sort of satisfaction that tugged hot against Will's heart. Hannibal leaned nearer, just enough for Will to tilt his chin up to keep eye contact.

"Never again without me, Will," he breathed, turning his face to draw their noses together softly, keeping his body infuriatingly out of reach. "I want you to show me. I want to see what I do to you."

Will's lips parted on a groan and he let his eyes close, relishing the warmth and closeness, clinging to the wall behind him as he refused to be the one to reach out first. They stood together, close, nuzzling soft enough to pull goosebumps to Will's skin before Hannibal sighed and stepped away.

Will cursed, rubbing a hand over his face to bring himself back together.

"I've business," Hannibal told him, the words distorted as though underwater before Will blinked and looked at him properly. "But later, perhaps."

Will didn’t say anything. He just watched Hannibal go before knocking his head back against the wall hard enough to see stars. He didn’t need this. He didn’t fucking need it.

But need and want were different things.

He had watched Hannibal and Anthony and the man who’d cursed him meet over a game of dominoes. Watched their body language; the languid overt sexuality of Anthony, the tight, upset shifting of Brown. He watched Hannibal, the mediator between them, his hands setting out dominoes and sweeping them aside again.

Will meditated on those hands, brought up the memory of the heat of them, the roughness of the palms and surprising elegance of his fingers. He considered ignoring their conversation entirely and retreating into the cell to jerk off again, imagining how those hands would feel against his throat, over his chest, wrapped around his cock…

Boredom in prison was lethal. It gave Will too much time to think.

Will looked on as Brown stood to go. He watched as Anthony and Hannibal continued to speak, both postures relaxed, now, that there was no one to perform for. He met Anthony's gaze when he looked up at him and refused to look away this time. Will tilted his head, returned the other's smile - a knowing, warm thing - and tried to stifle his disappointment when he and Hannibal departed the table in opposite directions; neither heading upstairs.

Will remained where he was a while longer, keenly aware of eyes on him despite Hannibal’s protection holding firm. He had dressed, today, in a manner he hoped suited Hannibal’s aesthetics; the pants instead of the jumpsuit from the uniform, a simple cotton shirt on top. His stubble was still rough against his face but dark enough to suggest the shape of a beard.

Hannibal’s words from the day before warmed beneath Will’s skin, pulled his shoulders straighter in a strange facsimile of pride.

I want you to draw eyes when you move through any space you’re in, I want those eyes to admire, and want, and understand that you are not theirs to have.

Will pushed off the railing, jogged down the stairs and made his way out to the yard. With more sleep came more energy. Energy Will had to find a way to burn before it burned through him. He'd never had a healthy outlet for it on the outside, and inside beyond exercise and physical exertion there was absolutely nothing else to feed it into.

He stretched, found an unoccupied set of bars and pulled himself up. Over and over, until sweat slicked his hair and his breathing came in harsh pants. He felt eyes on himself. Felt that sick burn like a brand against the back of his neck and ignored it. He pulled his shirt off to drape it over his face and dozed on a bench in the late afternoon sun until the signal sounded for dinner.

Will wasn't hungry. He was wired.

He could see Hannibal down in the mess, but did not join him. Instead, he let his hand linger on the rail, tensed his fingers against it, and returned to their cell. By the time Hannibal came

up it was close to lights out, perhaps twenty minutes. Will said nothing, waited until Hannibal's eyes found him - shoulders against the wall beside their bunks, the only corner of the room not visible with the door open - and raised his chin with a smile.

"Watch." He said.

And Hannibal did.

As Will teased himself through the fabric of his pants. As he reached in, still hidden from view, though there was no mistaking what his hands were doing. As his entire body went languid and his lips parted on a breath and his eyes closed. Hannibal's mark was fading against Will's skin, but he watched the skittering pulse, the way Will's throat worked as he swallowed down sound after sound of pleasure, touching himself like this because Hannibal had told him he'd wanted to watch, next time.

It was fascinating. The veneer of shame that had hung over Will Graham had cracked, somewhere, shattered. There was a power in him, now, that Hannibal felt respond to his own; like to like. This entire presentation held Hannibal helplessly in thrall, and it thrilled him.

He watched as Will brought himself closer and closer to the edge, breathed in the scent of sweat and sex. Before him was a man who would not bow and would not break. Before him was a man unwilling to be controlled, but willing to compromise.

Before him was something extraordinary.

He stepped nearer as Will arched up against the wall, nearer still as a sound caught in Will's throat and his lips parted wet with a click. He resisted the urge to spread his tongue flat and wide against Will's pulse and taste him as he came.

Only just.

Will felt Hannibal's breath against him again, felt the way it cooled the sweat on his skin, the way it shivered, just enough to notice, and grinned. He let the rush of pleasure spill over himself like water, taking his time to come back to himself, allowing Hannibal to look his fill. Only then did he open his eyes.

For a moment, neither moved, eyes hooded as each regarded the other. Close enough to touch. Close enough to kiss.

They didn't.

Will swallowed, snaked the tip of his tongue out to wet his lips.

"Satisfied?" he breathed. Hannibal hummed, eyes down to follow the motion.

"Are you?"

Will's grin darkened his eyes, answer enough. Hannibal watched him a moment longer, noted the freckles beneath Will's blush, just across his nose. Tempting, curious things. Tempting, curious boy.

“For tonight.” Will told him. “But I rarely get a full night’s rest.”

“Pity,” Hannibal replied, allowing a smile to soften his eyes as he ducked his head and finally brought their lips together.

Will groaned, a deep, low sound of absolute satisfaction, and wrapped his free hand over Hannibal’s shoulders to hold him close, his other he held to the side, unsure what to do with the mess without breaking the kiss.

And he wasn’t about to do that.

Hannibal kissed him like he sought to devour Will, pressing close and pinning Will between him and the brick, setting his hands on either side of Will’s face to hold him still. There was worship there, desire, pleasure, a deep pride that spoke to Will’s decision to submit without force or humiliation.

There was great power in willing submission. It earned respect.

Hannibal pulled back far enough to kiss against Will’s jaw, humming as he felt fingers curl hard in his hair. He sucked, pulling up a bruise there, too. Another mark. Another reminder before Hannibal caught Will’s chin and tilted it up, darkening the bruise he’d already made.

Will’s breath hissed between his teeth, he squirmed against him, moaned, helpless, when Hannibal didn’t relent. He had never asked to be kept. He had never wanted to be claimed. But Will felt absolutely weightless here, he felt wanted.

When Hannibal released him it was only to grasp his hand and suck Will’s fingers clean, a gesture so intimate Will couldn’t even watch. His cheeks were burning, his heart was beating in his throat. He felt every inch of Hannibal’s tongue against his fingers, between them, lips following to ensure he missed nothing.

It was filthy, and Will had to shove his fist between his teeth to keep from making a sound.

By the time Hannibal was finished, Will was trembling, completely overcome. He curled their fingers together when Hannibal’s thumb pressed to his palm, and allowed his head to be turned to face him again.

Beyond the door, he was vaguely aware of the shuffle of feet, the mutterings of prisoners, the hum in the air suggesting the end of the day. He barely blinked when the signal sounded and the lights went out, sighed when the door to their cell slid shut and locked for the night. Will parted his lips to the kiss Hannibal gave him, gentle, soft, and tasted himself against his tongue.

He was suddenly so bone-achingly tired he could have fallen asleep on his feet.

The workout, the orgasm, the patience he'd expended all day waiting for Hannibal, the concentration he'd allowed his mind to dedicate to him...

“Will,”

“Hmm?”

“Rest.”

Will snorted, but it wasn’t derisive. He turned his head against Hannibal when he kissed his temple, and squeezed their fingers together before slipping his hand free. He couldn't play at not being tired. It didn't matter that he was.

Will moved only when Hannibal did, following him step for step until he could slide into his bunk and curl on his side.

Hannibal rested back against the table and watched, fascinated, as sleep took Will quickly, as his lips slackened for breath, and his brows relaxed from the constant frown he wore.

Clever thing, lovely, obedient. In that moment Hannibal wondered if perhaps their party of three could use another; an extra pair of hands to gather supplies, plan the route, keep prying eyes away from their scheming.

Perhaps.

But not yet.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Hannibal had urges, of course, as any man would. Taken care of discreetly in his cell at night, once in a while shared with Anthony for old times' sake. But rarely did they drive Hannibal to distraction. Rarely did he sit out in the yard with the sole purpose of watching a man exercise, as he now sat watching Will.

The "everyone is flirting and the points don't matter" chapter, enjoy!

Chapter Notes

I love my rarepair and I will go down with that ship, I am not even sorry XD lots of Hannigram though I promise.

Hannibal Lecter
Psychologist, surgeon - both licenses since revoked
Charge: six counts of murder in the first degree (five dismissed due to lack of evidence), six counts of mutilation of a corpse (all dismissed due to lack of evidence), six counts of kidnapping (five dismissed due to lack of evidence), one count of cannibalism (pending retrial due to hung jury)
Sentence: Life without parole

Hannibal Lecter was a man of refined tastes.

Bespoke suits, elegant dinners, season passes to the opera and theatre, a cellar full of ancient, expensive wine, partners beautiful enough to draw the eye away from Hannibal. He spoke six languages. He was an extraordinary artist. He was a talented chef. He was a charming host.

And Hannibal had, in his lifetime, removed thirty unexceptional human beings from the world, turning them into extraordinary culinary tableaus for his unassuming guests.

The judge who presided over Hannibal's case had enjoyed several of the victims Hannibal had been accused of killing. As had the defense attorney.

Hannibal had weathered the media storm with quiet pride; he had refused to appear in court unless he was dressed in a suit, he kept his composure on the stand, he was never once rude,

nor did he raise his voice. But the prosecution started to lose their witnesses, as suddenly people were shown not to have been where they had claimed to be; evidence no longer held up under scrutiny when the lab couldn't get conclusive results; they could not convince the jury that the man before them was the horror movie villain he was.

It was amusing.

One by one, the accusations against Hannibal lost their weight. Count by count, he was found not guilty. In the end, the pressure from the public was what kept Hannibal incarcerated, the sheer volume of the accusations piled against him determined his sentence. He was found guilty of one count of kidnapping and murder.

He pled guilty.

Hannibal's skill lay in his composure, in his intricate planning and flawless execution. His reputation had preceded him to the prison, and his association with its most powerful inmate sealed it. Both were comfortable here, masters of this microcosm as they had been of their lives when they were free.

They stayed behind bars because they felt no need to leave, not because they had no means to.

In his six years behind bars, Hannibal had rarely allowed himself dalliances. Firstly, attraction - for Hannibal - was often not purely physical. Without a mind fascinating enough, no body was worth his effort. Some had tried, many younger ones sent by Cordell to try and win Hannibal's favor for the Farm. They had been returned untouched, politely refused.

If there was any group within the prison walls that revolted Hannibal to his very core, it was Muskrat Farm. Hannibal had known of it even before his incarceration. Rumour, mostly, a shadowy hint of danger as his own presence was, but he knew of it. Knew that boys were forcibly recruited behind bars, pushed into addiction, trained to prostitution, and upon release trafficked to wherever the Verger estate wanted them to go.

Above board, they presented themselves as a collective, a group for safety and support of the most vulnerable. They boasted a zero percent recidivism rate; which looked good on any prison's paperwork. The fact that the young men were simply never heard from again upon their release was swept under the rug.

Out of prison sight, out of prison mind. Just there to pump up their rehabilitation stats.

Hannibal had urges, of course, as any man would. Taken care of discreetly in his cell at night, once in a while shared with Anthony for old times' sake. But rarely did they drive Hannibal to distraction. Rarely did he sit out in the yard with the sole purpose of watching a man exercise, as he now sat watching Will.

Smaller than most of the men using the equipment, Will moved with enviable fluidity. Hannibal watched closely the bunching of his shoulders as he pulled himself up on the bar; the way the muscles trembled as Will held himself still; the sheen of sweat when he allowed himself to sink again before pulling himself up once more.

He'd hummed, a low warning sound, when Will had carelessly pulled his shirt off and tossed it to the ground before bouncing on the balls of his feet. This time when he caught the bar, he swung his legs over it, letting himself hang upside down before crossing his arms over his chest and curling up towards his knees.

Others watched, too.

Several of the Aryans considered Will's technique but didn't interfere with him, not to commend or adjust. One of the gang members Hannibal occasionally played chess with - a formidable opponent, though Hannibal was one of the few to know it - slapped the arm of his companion and pointed Will out.

And Cordell.

Cordell watched, as composed as Hannibal was, as carefully placed for just the right angle. He watched with a similar hunger Hannibal felt coiling within himself, but beneath it was a far darker desire. Putrid, filthy designs for a man like Will Graham.

Will caught the bar again, worked his feet free and let himself drop to the ground.

Hannibal watched him take a step and bend to grasp his shirt up with the tips of his fingers. Watched him wipe his face with it before draping it over his neck. Watched as Will realized he had eyes on him.

Will took his time coming over, the curve of his smirk proof enough that he was enjoying this as much as Hannibal. When he stopped, his feet were on either side of Hannibal's, their knees touching where Hannibal sat and Will stood over him.

"Bar's free." Will's breathing was still uneven, his chest still expanded far with every inhale. He smelled clean and alive and sardonic. He raised his brow when Hannibal didn't immediately reply and Hannibal felt his hands clench just enough to remind him not to move, or reach out, or touch, here.

"Keeping up your training regimen?"

Will's smile widened, eyes narrowed in mischievous delight. Of course Hannibal knew about him, now. Of course he'd needle it.

"They make analysts take the physicals annually," he complained with a shrug. "I've found it annoys them more when we pass."

"One's success, when their failure is expected, is the ultimate victory," Hannibal replied, allowing himself to openly look at Will, now, when Will was so openly letting him see.

It was this, too, that held Hannibal entirely in thrall; the shift of power between them any time either of them bared their teeth. Even when Hannibal was assertive, when he pushed Will to outwardly confirm their dynamics, Will never floundered. He never cast his eyes aside and bent, submissive and weak. He held Hannibal's gaze and taunted him with his obedience.

Even now, Will shifted his hips, masking the motion as necessary for pushing his hands into his pockets. Even now he leaned nearer, incrementally, as he rocked to the balls of his feet, tempting Hannibal to touch.

And it was, in truth, only his pleasure in the delay that held Hannibal back.

“You will go and change,” Hannibal told him after a moment, raising his eyes to meet Will’s.

“Will I?”

“Yes. You’ve made a mess of yourself throwing your clothes to the ground.”

Will’s grin melted flawlessly into that crooked smirk again as he tilted his head, considered Hannibal before him. Will could feel that gaze that occasionally left his skin crawling, its sensation like sandpaper against him, nearby. He needed it to go away. He needed that barrier of Hannibal’s words, his promise, between them.

When he bent, it was at the waist, and only far enough to whisper to Hannibal.

“Can’t have that,”

He felt familiar fingers against his chest, tickling cool up his throat to press beneath his jaw and moved where Hannibal moved him. They were close enough that their breath mingled warm between them.

“Go, Will.”

So he did. Keeping his eyes on Hannibal as he straightened, as he drew his shirt up over the back of his head to spike up the shorter hair there before he moved away.

Hannibal watched him go. He didn’t need to turn to know that Cordell was no longer in the yard with him, having disappeared as quietly as he had arrived.

“They said you have a screwdriver,”

“They?”

“Lecter said you did.”

“Hannibal would know a lot about screw… driving.”

“Do you have one or not?”

“Are you going to beat it out of me if I don’t tell you?” Anthony pushed the chair back to balance on two legs and regarded Matthew over the rims of his glasses. The young man had been haunting his doorway for two days asking for this or that, occasionally useful things, often useless ones.

Getting shit sorted for the plan, he'd insisted.

"What do you want, Mr. Brown?"

"I already said -"

"In the box under the bed, where all the rest of the contraband is, though it somehow always manages to be overlooked during inspection." he shrugged, rocked the chair back a little. "And you'll take it and squirrel it away with the rest of the things you've borrowed from me, and then show up like a ghost in my doorway not two hours later. So what do you want?"

Matt's arms folded tight against his chest and he frowned over his shoulder before addressing Anthony again.

"Anyone ever tell you you're an annoying shit?"

"In no uncertain terms," Anthony grinned, "and in much more colourful language. Why, am I annoying you? You're the one loitering in my doorway."

"Shut up."

"Make me," Anthony's chair slammed down to all four legs again, and he stood, drawing his glasses from his face. "And that's it isn't it? You want to, and it's eating you up."

Matt hummed, annoyed and thin, and shoved his shoulder harder against the doorjamb, as though the motion alone would be enough to dislodge the tension between them. He didn't know why he enjoyed the push-pull of an argument so much, why it turned him on to high heaven to be disagreed with by someone beautiful and clever. It infuriated him how difficult it was to get a reaction from Anthony that was genuine, not carefully choreographed disdain.

"Keep dreaming."

Anthony shrugged. "Free country. Get it then, you intolerable thing, I told you where it was."

Matt pursed his lips, curled them inwards against his teeth before huffing out a heavy sigh.

"I need… a favor."

"Another one?" Anthony pushed his glasses up into his hair and bent to flip closed the ledger he'd been working on at his table. "You're really racking them up."

"I need you to organize a fight."

Anthony considered him, waiting for Matt to look up before raising an eyebrow expectantly. Watching the young man struggle with his pride gave him more satisfaction than Anthony cared to admit.

"One of the Aryan bastards, Warren."

"Twice your size, half the brain capacity. So?"

“He’s got a diamond in his tooth,” Matt said. “One of those gaudy things popular half a decade ago. Shows it off like his pride and fucking joy.”

Anthony blinked at him, acting deliberately obtuse to watch Matt squirm with frustration. There was little Anthony could *not* do in this prison, very little he couldn’t get away with. Organizing a boxing match, one the guards either supervised or looked away for, was hardly an effort.

“I need it,” Matt said slowly, drawing the words out, silently begging for Anthony to fucking *understand* already so he wouldn’t have to actually ask him, not properly. But he didn’t. So Matt bit his tongue and sighed. “It will cut through metal, the sheet’s thin enough. It’s the only thing I can think of that will work in the time frame we have.”

“Hmm.”

“Please.” Matt could feel his face heat with the word and resolutely stared out the door as Anthony continued to watch him. He set his jaw tighter when he heard Anthony move, but still refused to look at him.

“I suppose I can arrange it. Could even manage it for tomorrow evening if you’ve limbered up.” Anthony popped the plosive and moved to stand opposite Matthew in the doorway. “But I’m afraid I’ve run out of IOUs, Mr. Brown. What will you give me for that, right now?”

Matt turned to him, shrugged. “What do you want.”

“No, see, I’ve been here longer than you my dear, I know what’s available and the exchange rate as it fluctuates in this unpredictable economy. I could name my price and be done with it, but I would *much* rather have you present me with an offer.”

Matthew swallowed. The obvious answer was there; highest currency in prison was ass, regardless of which way people claimed to swing. Ass and cock, in various locations and for various durations but…

Matt snorted, looked away. For a moment he said nothing, drumming his fingers against the crook of his arm, before casting a side-eye at the man across from him.

“I’ll shut you up.” he said.

Anthony’s eyes narrowed, his smile warming the dimples in his cheeks as he watched Matt duck his head and look away again, equally as amused. They were always fun, these untamable ones. A brief, bright, welcome blip on the radar of a life sentence. He pushed off from the door, setting a palm to Matt’s chest to keep him where he was.

“Get your damn screwdriver,” he murmured. “I’ve another favor to call in, and *when* I come back, you’ll inevitably remember you need to borrow something else and come and darken my doorway again. I’ll be sure to talk too much.” he winked, pressing his fingertips to Matthew’s sternum before stepping out onto the balcony without bothering to look back.

Matt lingered long enough to forget where Anthony said the screwdriver was.

As soon as the cell doors slammed shut, his hands were on Will. Yanking his shirt out of his pants, pressing his palms hard against the sharp hipbones he'd revealed. Hannibal had always prided himself on his patience, but a man could only take so much.

He'd run into Brown and Anthony earlier, both at different times, and worked out more of the subtle details of their plan. Matthew needed tools to begin constructing whatever-it-was that would help them cut their way into the air vents - tools which Anthony had. And Anthony needed a betting pool organized for an impromptu fight for the next evening.

The entire prison ran on vice and violence.

He found he was almost unsurprised when he saw Will sharing a cigarette with Brian Zeller at the end of one of the hallways that led outside. Hannibal had watched, for a few moments, the way Will's entire body was open, relaxed, the way he allowed himself to smile at something Brian had said before passing the cigarette over.

He'd changed his shirt, too.

Good boy.

He'd made a show of apologizing profusely for interrupting them, amused by Zeller's immediate fumbling to assure him he hadn't, and Will's casual questioning glance. He'd declined a cigarette - though the idea of tasting Will again, even by proxy of a paper filter was incredibly tempting - and instead spoke with Brian.

There was no one better connected or on better terms with almost every individual in the prison than its friendly neighbourhood drug dealer. As Hannibal passed on the details, approved Brian's suggestions, and agreed to turn a blind eye to him using the gathering to trial a new substance, his entire focus was on Will.

Not once did Will's eyes look away, not once did he turn his body or close it off. Silently, carefully, Will was wheedling his way into every aspect of Hannibal's concentration. He said nothing as Hannibal shook Brian's hand, set his other to his shoulder and passed on his best to his partner. He said nothing as Hannibal gave Will nothing more than a cursory glance before walking away.

At dinner - where Anthony again made quick work of both his and Will's fatty cutoffs of meat - Hannibal made sure to give Will just as little attention as he had earlier. It took very little time before he felt the pressure of the man's thigh against his own, warmth radiating from him as he damn near vibrated with energy. Hannibal acted as though he couldn't feel Will hooking his foot against his ankle. He met Anthony's amused gaze with narrowed eyes as next to him Will arched his back and stretched with a quiet sound before seeming to settle again.

He'd eventually sent Will back upstairs before him, feigning a brusque tone just to watch those blue eyes darken and narrow at him. He'd waited as long as he could, teasing Anthony

as mercilessly as the other had teased him, when Matthew moved past their table with a deliberate shove of his hips against Anthony's side as he'd passed.

And then he'd gone, holding onto the railing as he moved up the stairs, timing his steps with the jangle of keys from the roofless watchtower as he walked the balcony. He'd slipped into his cell moments before the lights flicked out and the door closed and Will was *right there* and finally his to touch properly.

Beneath Hannibal, Will was electricity, he was fireworks. Eager hands sought to ruffle Hannibal's hair, to tug the collar of his shirt impatiently before fumbling with the buttons. Neither said a word, they hardly needed to; their breaths rushed hissed between tight teeth or pulled into quiet sounds.

It was mutual impatience and desire and a need to break through prison tedium. It was far from loving, but it hardly had to be.

By the time Hannibal's hand curled around Will's cock, he had sharp nail marks like railway lines against his back and sides. He shoved up against Will, pressing them both hard against the door and shifting it just enough on its path to make a sound. Will cursed, snorted, and wrapped a hand against the back of Hannibal's head to bring him up to kiss.

He had wanted Hannibal to touch him that morning, as much to remind whoever was burning Will with his eyes to look elsewhere as to have broken Hannibal's resolve. He'd wanted Hannibal to scold him more, about his clothes, about his carelessness. He'd wanted Hannibal to follow him when he'd gone to change.

He whimpered as Hannibal stroked him, drawing the rough pad of his thumb over the head of Will's cock. The door clanged again as Will banged his head back against it.

"Your restraint is infuriating," Will managed, half-whispered half groaned through gritted teeth as Hannibal bit against his earlobe and *tugged*.

"Patience is a virtue."

"Fuck off."

"Language, Will."

Will groaned, unashamed and loud, and pressed a hand to his face as Hannibal's mouth moved lower, exploring the scars Will had brought to prison with him, cataloguing those he'd acquired here. He sucked a nipple between his lips and gently bit down, relishing the full-body shudder that won him.

Will was hardly gentle either; his hands wreaking havoc on Hannibal's clothes, his hair, his skin, where he could reach it. He'd leave the man just as claimed, just as marked, as he would leave Will. Many had seen Will submit, he'd have them know he was far from submissive.

"Come *on*," Will groaned, rolling his hips up, trying to get friction as Hannibal moved to deny it. "You want this as much as I do."

“And I’m rather enjoying taking my time,” Hannibal replied, drawing a wide wet swath up the center of Will’s chest with his tongue. He caught Will’s face with a harsh hand and kissed him before he could swear again, allowing a sound of his own to curl between them when Will obediently opened his mouth to him.

Will’s hands didn’t sit idle. He made quick work of Hannibal’s pants and pushed his hands down into his underwear to take him in hand as well. Their kiss broke with low groans of pleasure, Will immediately pushing up onto his toes to draw his nose against Hannibal, nuzzling him deliberately as he worked Hannibal with both hands.

They were making enough noise for wolf whistles to occasionally penetrate the warm hum in Will’s mind, and those drove him to press to Hannibal harder, to curl a hand beneath his balls as his other drew down his foreskin, teasing him as Hannibal was teasing Will.

They were close, both of them, drunk on each other.

Will made a sound that was damn near *aching* when Hannibal deliberately grasped his wrists and moved Will’s hands away from him. The motion was followed with a graceful kneel, Hannibal’s hands moving from Will’s skin to the fabric of his pants to pull them down around his knees.

Above him, Will snorted a laugh and pushed up on his toes again.

“"How do you define trust?"” Will mumbled to himself, catching Hannibal’s eyes when the other looked askance and laughing again. “A cannibal is about to suck my dick,” he clarified.

Hannibal’s eyes narrowed, pleasure wrinkling their corners as he sat nearer, pressing his mouth open and hot against Will’s stomach.

“Alleged,” he corrected him, delighting in Will’s laugh again before bending to take him into his mouth.

One hand immediately went to Will’s lips, shoving hard between his teeth to keep from moaning loud enough to echo. The other slipped through Hannibal’s hair, fingers spreading against his back when Will rested his wrist against his neck to keep him where he was.

Jesus. It had been a long time since Will had let himself feel so fucking good.

Hannibal sucked Will like he was worshipping him, at once teasing and devouring him as he brought Will so close to climax he could taste him. Sharp nails in warning, a hiss of pain as Hannibal pulled away, eyes up to look at Will above him.

He looked absolutely ravishing.

“You keep doing that, I’m going to come,” Will warned him, words slurred into a drawl Hannibal hadn’t heard from him before.

“I should hope so.”

Will groaned, pressing a hand over his eyes as Hannibal leaned in to deliberately lick up a drop of precum from his cock.

“I want to make you come,” Will countered after a moment, defiant when Hannibal regarded him again, despite how obviously, desperately close he was to losing himself to this. “Want to see what I do to you.”

When Hannibal stood again, Will immediately yanked him close to kiss the taste of himself from his mouth, one hand down to seek Hannibal’s cock once more.

“What you do to me,” Hannibal murmured, rutting up against Will hard enough to make the door clang again. He caught Will’s hand and pressed it to the metal, moving closer to take them both in hand to stroke together.

“You undo me,” he whispered, lips close enough to Will’s to brush against them as he spoke, he turned like a cat into the palm against his face and closed his eyes. Between them, his hand twisted, enough to draw both of their breaths up short, a moment of shimmering silence before they were moving again. “You drive me to distraction. A veritable Adonis in the yard. Eyes on you. Watching you. Wanting you. *Seeing* you, Will.”

Will groaned, turned his wrist just enough in the hand that pinned him to feel Hannibal press him against the door harder.

“Just how you wanted,” he breathed, grinning when Hannibal smeared a kiss against his cheek and stroked them faster.

“Extraordinary boy,” Hannibal praised him. “Clever. Snarling. Wild.”

“*Fuck*,”

“They’re listening, right now, to the sounds you make for me,” Hannibal continued. “Envious, aching, imagining that you’re on your knees for me, or bent over for me, taking what I give you… little do they know,”

Hannibal’s voice broke a moment and he turned his face against Will’s as the other clung to him. Hannibal’s hand was slick between them, both of them so close it almost hurt to keep touching.

“Little do they know how you control me. How hard you make me work.”

“Hannibal -”

The hand shoved against the door curled tight into a fist, Will’s lips drew back and he whined softly as he came between them, shuddering and breathless and sated. Hannibal indulged, then, in his fantasy of licking Will’s pulse, of sucking his sweat from his lips as Will’s body grew tense then heavy and lax against him. And it was in that moment that Hannibal allowed himself to follow Will over, that moment of surrender and trust and vulnerability that Will offered as willingly as he’d offered this.

It took long minutes for both of them to come back from where pleasure had sent them. Long minutes until Will twisted his wrist free and wrapped his arms loosely around Hannibal's shoulders. Long minutes until Hannibal - ignoring the mess between them - set wide hands to rest against Will's sides. Forehead to forehead they just shared air, shared warmth. They didn't need words again.

Will was swaying with exhaustion by the time Hannibal kissed just beneath his eye. He followed where Hannibal moved him - to his bunk - and crawled in, uncaring for his dishevelled clothes, making just enough effort to kick off his shoes before curling up with his face to the wall.

He would deny the sound he made in the morning, if Hannibal were to bring it up, but as Hannibal settled in behind him, pressed impossibly close on the tiny bed, and wrapped an arm heavy over Will's middle, he trusted his protection.

Will fell asleep smiling at the tickling sensation of Hannibal nosing deep into his curls, and didn't wake in the night, alone.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

> *"Remind Lecter, or Dimmond, perhaps, that three to a match," he said, "is just as dangerous now as it was in the trenches. There will always be someone with a scope, prepared to watch. Certain things may prompt them to wait, however, before an inevitable execution."*
>
> A spanner in the works...

Chapter Notes

> More plot than smut in this and the next chapter, folx, but I hope it's worth the wait! I'm enjoying the plotting of this as much as the smutting and all your comments are completing me!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cordell Doemling
Medical doctor - license since revoked
Charge: Family annihilator
Sentence: Life without parole

Cordell was a patient man, above and beyond all else that he was.

Patience that had brought pain to so many and such pleasure to him had earned him a life sentence. Patience behind bars, as a model inmate, had earned him privileges. Patience had led to one letter, then another, and more, from a like-minded faceless man beyond the prison walls, when his case had come up for appeal.

Patience had built up Muskrat Farm.

As it stood, the organisation - a term Cordell enjoyed using, simply to watch the disbelief and disgust that it brought forth in others - watched over and cared for seven young men. Two lifers in management, excluding Cordell himself, and a direct contact to Mr. Verger on the outside.

A small collective. Intimate.

According to prison records, Muskrat Farm mentored, counselled, and helped troubled young men repent and reform behind bars. They had seen no recidivism since the group's inception, and none of the young men who had passed through its program had been on the news again.

According to those with eyes, young men head hunted by the Farm became pliable, pretty things, very willing to accommodate even the most pushy of inmates seeking company. They were plied with smuggled food and heavy drugs, encouraged to recruit others for better privileges and a chance at early release. Most of the boys left the Farm skeletal and desperate, conditioned to respond to commands and demands at the turn of a wrist.

They were picked up in private cars just beyond the prison walls and whisked away to their new promised life.

Whether any of them lived much longer than that was anyone's guess; they were never on the news again.

Cordell's proclivities often coincided with his business partner's; young, agile, mouthy, pretty things. Certain boys weren't in the care of the Farm long at all before a mysterious transfer was offered them. Some stayed their sentence fully, idols for the newer recruits to look up to.

But sometimes, Cordell's patience needed an outlet. Needed to stretch and groan within the confines of Muskrat Farm. On those occasions, he would find himself a more difficult project. Someone older. Someone stronger. Someone who needed *time* that Cordell was more than willing to give him.

He had sampled the coiled defiance of Will Graham early in the man's incarceration, delighting in how he was determined to remain silent, determined to remain stoic, determined to be a lone wolf. Cordell had come close to enjoying him properly, once. Just once.

And then, curiously, Hannibal Lecter had decided he was interesting.

In truth, Cordell really hadn't much contact with Lecter; no common interests, no desire on Hannibal's part to invest for future generations of good, able boys. They had their own orbits, had no reason to intersect the other's.

And yet.

The beautiful man both had so keenly eyed now connected them; tempting one and preening for the other.

So Cordell returned to just watching, to enjoying the display of scarred skin sweat-slick in the sun of the yard. He watched as slowly Will Graham lost his stiffness, as slowly, he moved his body as it was meant to be moved. He watched and he remembered, catalogued, carefully filed away every instance that Will was a temptation.

And he waited.

Cordell was a patient man.

The arrival of Graham had not been the only thing to stir certain lifers to breaking usual routines.

Dimmond seemed on edge far more often. He and Lecter met as they always had, but now their heads were bowed together, scheming. Chess in their rooms, not in the mess. New rules for dominoes, as Cordell calmly watched from above. Adopting fierce, wild things like Matthew Brown, and not using him.

Quite unlike the two old criminals.

Curiouser and curiouser.

Asking around yielded little; a rumour there, a snippet of conversation here. But slowly, slowly, the pieces fell into place. The meetings, the dominoes, the fight planned out of schedule for unequally matched opponents.

Such basic mistakes for Anthony Dimmond, notorious and most wanted by OCCRP, friend and lover to mobsters and businessmen alike to make lightly.

Meaning it wasn't a mistake. None of it was. Dimmond was ruthless when it came to his own survival.

Coupled with Brown's anger, his partner's transfer, the impatience that had been brewing like a storm in the prison for months…

They were leaving. Or, perhaps more accurately, they were just on the cusp of a near-perfect escape. The forger, the thief, the cannibal and his lover. Cordell had to admit it had a ring to it, poetic and cynical, all at once.

How coincidental, then, that the human factor really did always get in the way of perfection. Patience and it's virtues, Cordell and his hobbies.

It seemed Cordell had been patient enough for it to pay off beautifully. All the more pleasing for how long he had waited, how many folders of precious memories Will Graham had taken up in his mind.

He watched, now, as Will left the library, hair mussed from how roughly he'd tugged it in his impatience. He followed only when the younger man moved through the mess and onwards, hummed when Will found his path blocked by a few of the more obedient Farm boys and turned on his heel to face him.

"Mr. Graham."

"What."

Cordell spread his hands in a show of peace, watched as it did little to ease the tension from the man before him.

"Conversations are hardly out of order, Mr. Graham," he said. "I'm sure even Dr. Lecter appreciates good company. He's certainly been appreciating *yours*, and from the sounds of

things it's been quite the quid pro quo."

"You trapped me in a corridor to remind me you're a pervert?" Will muttered, eyes seeking over Cordell's shoulder, a quick flick over his own. "Sound carries, Cordell. The Farm has been keeping you plenty busy."

"My body, perhaps," the other shrugged.

"Forgive me if I'm unable to summon my sympathies."

"I did always enjoy how polite you were with me," Cordell told him, taking a step nearer and watching Will's mirrored retreat. "I ask only they you pass along a message. Just words."

"What if I'm disinclined to?" Will asked, entire body hot with how tight his muscles pulled.

"You're a clever boy, Will, I'm sure you'll decide what this information means for you." Cordell said, hands casually in his pockets as he regarded Will. For a moment, neither spoke, then Cordell took a breath and sighed it free.

"Remind Lecter, or Dimmond, perhaps, that three to a match," he said, "is just as dangerous now as it was in the trenches. There will always be someone with a scope, prepared to watch. Certain things may prompt them to wait, however, before an inevitable execution."

Will blinked, brows furrowing and heart hammering against his throat. He didn't have time for this shit. This wasn't Alice in fucking Wonderland. But to his surprise, Cordell merely let the words sit before turning and walking away.

Behind Will, the corridor was no longer blocked off.

Despite the exchange lasting moments, despite nothing but words between them, Will felt violated. He felt ill.

Will jerked when the door opened, pressing a hand beneath his glasses with a curse before turning to look over his shoulder.

Matthew regarded him with a furrowed brow as he flipped up his hood.

"You lost?"

"I didn't know there was a line."

Matt sniffed, drawing a hand tellingly over his mouth before shrugging. "Isn't. Was just calling in a favor."

Will eyed him, watched the self-conscious motions before Brown just turned to walk away. He'd be the last man in this prison to judge a guy for scratching an itch. But even with Anthony's door now open, Will hesitated before going in.

Something about the entire situation didn't sit well with him. He'd been behind bars long enough now to understand at least the function - if not the details - of the hierarchies within. If Cordell had something to tell Anthony, or Hannibal, he would tell them himself.

Will's participation was unnecessary, he knew that, and it irked him.

"Will," Anthony's expression seamlessly flicked from disappointment to confusion to calm acceptance. It hardly eased Will's mind.

"Can we talk?" He asked.

Dimmond considered long enough that Will was about to forget the whole thing. He'd gone to Anthony because he knew Cordell wanted him to go to Hannibal. Despite their arrangement, Will had never outwardly claimed Hannibal's protection outside their room. It was just there, unspoken and understood. He hated the idea of grovelling. Or being a lackey to anyone, let alone Cordell fucking Doemling.

"Running anything from the infirmary this evening?"

Will blinked, frowned. "Wasn't planning on it."

Anthony hummed, then stood aside for Will to come in, leaving it to him to close the door or leave it open.

He left it open.

Will noticed immediately how odd the cell looked compared to others. It was almost homely, like oddly dark campus housing for scholarship kids. Books everywhere, against every wall, a table piled high with paperwork, folders, files, boxes, pens, pencils, a calculator that looked like it belonged in the seventies, some newspapers, magazines of multiple genres.

He accepted Anthony’s offer of a cigarette - much smoother and more aromatic than those Will smoked - and pressed his back against the wall just by the door. Neither spoke for a while, Anthony seemingly as content as Will was to skirt around the conversation they weren’t having. Will noticed but didn’t look back to the unmistakably messed up bed, breathed the smoke in through his nose to forget the smell of stale breath and sweat.

“You deal with the Farm at all?” He asked after a while, didn’t look at Anthony when the other made a soft sound of disgust.

“Been a long time since I’ve had to sink so low,” Anthony told him, ashing his cigarette and setting the mug to the edge of the table for Will to use as well. “Thankfully they have their own villains handling the books.”

“Cordell cornered me in the hallway today because he has a message to pass on,” Will continued, tone as casual as he could keep it, despite how deeply he inhaled and how hard he held the cigarette so his hand wouldn’t shake.

“A message for me?”

“For you and Hannibal, apparently.”

The forger frowned, pushing his glasses up into his hair before regarding Will. “And you’re passing it on to *me*.”

Will hummed, displeased, and held his breath for a moment. Long enough to feel the smoke settle to his throat. Long enough to feel the burn of it tug at his reflex to cough.

“Couldn’t find Hannibal,” was all Will said. Both were content to ignore the blatant lie. Will didn’t speak again until he’d smoked the cigarette down to the filter.

“Said something about making sure you and he remember the dangers of three to a match,” Will pursed his lips, recalling. “About someone with a scope watching, always, and waiting to execute an order. Apparently you’d know what would make them wait on it.”

Anthony stilled, eyes in the middle distance as he took the words in, shifted them in his mind until they made sense. Will looked over just once to make sure he hadn’t fallen asleep, or chosen to ignore him, before bringing his hand to his mouth to chew pensively against the side of his thumb.

Even without the exact wording the entire message felt off to Will, something obvious hung on the edge of the unspoken that he just couldn’t grasp and it was tormenting him. Why him? Why was he passing this message on? Why hadn’t Cordell gone to see Hannibal or Anthony himself, or sent a boy? *Why Will?*

“What a cunt,” Anthony murmured after a while. His demeanor hadn’t changed, his expression remained lax and his eyes unfocused, but his fingers were curling into a fist over and over against the table’s edge.

Then he blinked, looked up, offered Will a wan smile. “I should hardly be surprised, of course, but vermin never cease to surprise you. Every creature has an ingrained desire to survive, above all things. No matter, alright, forget it. I’ll deal with it. But look, if you’re not *frightfully* busy this afternoon could you pass something along to Price in the infirmary?”

Will snorted softly. “What’s my cover story?”

Anthony shrugged and pushed himself to stand. “Entirely up to you, my dear, depends how long you want to stay. I shan’t need you to return with it so it’s just in and out unless you’re desperate for food poisoning.”

“Can’t say I am.”

Anthony laughed, a gentle and pleasant thing. “No, I suppose not, with the company you’d be missing.” He passed Will something fairly heavy but small enough to hide in the palm of his hand, wrapped in a swatch of patterned cotton. “Much obliged.”

Will hummed and palmed the thing, casting a quick look out the door before turning to Anthony again. “What’ll get me in for an hour?”

The other shrugged, folding the sleeves of his shirt up before pushing them past his elbows. “Scrapes, cuts, minor wounds, burns. Anything that goes beneath the first few layers of the dermis really. Anything more than that would warrant a much longer errand.”

“Right,” Will smiled despite himself. How quickly one adapted to new environments, despite the strangeness of that evolution to anyone looking in. He took off his glasses and shoved them into his pocket before looking at Anthony again. The other offered that weak, wan look again.

“Try not to bite your tongue.”

The punch was loud enough to warrant a few *damns* from loitering inmates but little more, and Will couldn’t help but laugh as he brought a hand up to stem the blood at his lip. He mouthed a very pointed *fuck you* to Anthony who waved him off with a grin.

He’d done little more than split the thin skin against Will’s teeth, but Will could already feel adrenaline cool in his blood. He wanted to fight someone. He wanted to scream. It had been months since he’d had a good scream. He made his way to the infirmary uncaring for the looks shot his way or the comments given, working his glasses back onto his nose with his free hand.

What annoyed Will most, was that he still felt that heaviness, that tightness in his throat even after passing Cordell’s message along. None of the weight of it had shifted, none of the uncertainty. Will still felt like he was in the crosshairs despite not feeling Cordell’s eyes on him, now.

He shoved his thumb against the cut, pushing more blood up against his lip. A careful smear, a pursing of the lips, and Will looked pathetic enough to be let through by the guard on duty, and escorted to the infirmary by the one beyond.

Will was running low on cigarettes, anyway.

Chapter End Notes

For those interested: three to a match

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> *“Two years,” Will continued, watching Hannibal now as he spoke. “For a moment of unbridled pleasure at taking a life. There is hardly morality beyond these walls, Hannibal. My act, my sentence, speaks to hedonism on a far deeper level than it does a moral conscience.”*
>
> *“Why did you kill him?” Hannibal asked, voice low, soft, and Will’s pleasure unfurled as his body did.*
>
> *“Because God told me to.” He grinned. "I reflect the monsters people try to hide from me. I become their sin eater. And I got hungry."*
>
> A bit of Preller, a bit of Hannigram, a bit of plot, in there, too!

Brian Zeller
Morgue technician, unlicensed chemist, accidental car thief
Charge: Arson
Sentence: Five years (due to previous minor criminal convictions)

For Brian, crime hadn't been in his life plan.

College educated, normal family life, relatively happy middle class suburban upbringing. By BAU standards he was someone so low risk he wouldn't have even been a blip on the radar.

And in truth, the only reason crime pulled Brian into its embrace eventually was because he cared too much, and got bored too easily.

In his first year of college he realized that he got a far greater high tampering with the substances flying rampant about campus than he did in taking them. A stupid bet one night with his roommate grew into a lucrative business for them both. Their drugs were mostly safe and they were exciting; longer lasting high, fewer negative aftereffects, the occasional additional bonus such as partial synesthesia.

Brian dropped to part time study for his second year to keep supply up with demand, while his boyfriend continued on ahead by mutual agreement.

Brian was the production line and the face of marketing; awkward, funny, with a grin that could charm the devil and a mind to match. He didn't get high off his own supply, he rarely did anything stronger than weed, and sleep? He could sleep when he was dead.

Or when Jimmy made him.

Jimmy was distribution. Quiet, unassuming, straight A student. His sarcasm and biting humor assured him a select and welcome group of friends, while his studiousness curried favour from his professors. Every three months or so he would take a week to visit family, but no assignments were ever missed and every test was taken.

In reality, Jimmy's family hadn't seen him since he packed his car on the morning of high school graduation. He and Brian just had a standing reservation for a cabin in Banff for every season of the year. Juggling illegal substances, legal additions to them, and the assignments, labs, and tests that came with medical school was exhausting, after all.

It wasn't even the drugs that had gotten Brian in trouble initially.

Not really.

Brian had stolen a car as a prank, sticking it to a guy whose body preferred building muscles to brain cells after he'd talked smack about Jimmy. It turned out campus security weren't too keen on chasing wayward students over the football fields at two in the morning, and Brian learned he wasn't a particularly skilled driver when the chase ended in a ditch.

He got suspension and a mark against his name with the local cops. Business took a kick in the pants til the hubbub blew over, and when Brian returned to school he dropped out of the medical program to take up mortuary science instead.

For a few years more they both flew under the radar. Brian graduated first and found work, tempting Jimmy into the land of the dead with promises of morbid humor and unconscionable working hours, and in his final year, Jimmy switched as well, cross-crediting enough of the papers required that his schedule allowed for the two of them to expand their business off campus.

The arson charge… well, Brian would argue that that had been an accident. He hadn't *meant* to set fire to their garage-slash-lab, and in truth he *hadn't*, he'd just not been able to put it out and by the time an investigation had started it was clear that he'd been the only one home when first responders arrived.

When the fire had been found suspicious, and Brian had been unable to provide an alibi beyond *I wanted to save as much of the lab as I could before it blew the block up, honestly, this could have been much messier than it ended up being*, he'd been handed a five-year sentence.

He hadn't been too bothered, really. He just hated the fact that he'd pulled Jimmy into this shit with him. Not into prison - not *really* into prison - but into this life of petty crime neither had ever planned to enter. But Jimmy was nothing if not the definition of ride-or-die, and within two years of Brian's time, he'd wheedled his way into the infirmary as a med tech. He was certain he'd gotten the gig after he'd cheerfully pointed out at his interview that he was also a qualified morgue technician, should the prison need help there too.

They did, sometimes.

Reunited, Brian and Jimmy again built up a precarious little empire within the prison walls, and instead of a Banff vacation every three months, Brian would just buy off one of the gangs to "gently" beat him up so he could spend a few weeks in the infirmary with his boyfriend.

He'd always been a hopeless romantic.

Anthony knew that.

"A kilo," Brian shook his head, pensively unwrapping the chocolate he'd been offered before popping it into his mouth. "That's about a month's supply in one go. Outside that would set us back a good -" he glanced to the ceiling, calculating as he tongued the candy from one cheek to the other. "- ten or twelve grand."

"Good thing you're not outside." Anthony's eyes narrowed in a smile and Brian snorted, shrugging his agreement. "What'll it mean for you in here?"

Brian hummed, rocking his chair back on two legs as he considered. "It'll interrupt some other things I've got goin'," he scratched the back of his head. "It'll really mess up the Farm, too, which never bodes well for anybody. The kids go into withdrawal, huge pain in the *tuches* for management since they can't - you know - for a few days." He squinted, disgust clear in his expression, before he shook his head. "I just provide for 'em, I don't know what they do with it after, I don't *want* to know, but it'll be my ass on the line - or *in* line - if they don't get their shit."

Anthony hummed, drumming his fingers softly against the fold of his arm as he watched Brian fidget. He'd never had a problem with Zeller. Beyond genuinely being entirely too amusing for his own good, he and Jimmy had inadvertently cleaned up the prison's drug supply and made it relatively safer for everyone involved. He never asked for favors, never screwed with anyone, and seemed entirely contented to serve out his time without drama.

"So worth quite a lot more inside, then," he replied finally, catching Brian's eye when he looked up.

"It'd cost more. Worth is relative."

Anthony's smile widened. "I'd like to propose a trade."

In an instant, Brian's chair hit the ground with a snap, and he set both hands to the table with a small sound.

"I'm not sure I've -"

"Relax," Anthony sat back, took up the cigarette he'd had behind his ear and worked it between his fingers. "It's mutually beneficial. Very little sacrifice beyond the courage to take a risk."

He hummed his thanks when Brian took out a book of matches and lit one for him. When he sat back, he considered the younger man in front of him. Brian had returned to fidgeting

again, just turning the book of matches over and over between his fingers as his knee bounced under the table.

“How long til your release?”

“Two and six,” Brian replied. “Ish.

“You’ve got a good set up for two and six,” he replied, ashing the cigarette to the floor. “Ish.”

“Define good.” Brian’s smile was thin, but he didn’t push the matter, just waited for Anthony to speak again, casting his eyes to him once in a while like a nervous animal. It was almost endearing, considering that neither had had trouble with each other before, how deeply Anthony’s reputation rooted him in this system, how high it held him on a pedestal.

“You have a clean product, popular, in demand, safe enough to fly beneath the radar. And with such limited resources. It’s a miracle nothing’s gone wrong in the pipeline somewhere.”

Brian eyed him a moment more, gaze narrowing but hardly offended. Anything could go wrong, at any part of the process. Chemistry was a frivolous thing.

“Would be a shame,” Anthony continued, looking past Brian as he spoke, gaze resting elsewhere. “If the Farm was found to be distributing product of less than perfect quality. Dangerous product, deadly product.”

“That could take time,” Brian replied carefully, watching Anthony casually ash his cigarette again.

“Good things always do.”

Brian set the matchbook to the table and his finger atop, still for the moment as he considered the unspoken words between the spoken ones. Then, he drummed his fingers over the cardboard and left it there as he sat back.

“I need fo- mm.” he shook his head. “Five days to get that much product together, with the aforementioned extras. Half that if you want the effects a little more… drawn out. I’ve a bit left, clean, to work with.”

“And your other things you’ve got going?”

“What other things?” Brian met Anthony’s eyes and held them. He only blinked when Anthony put his cigarette out between his thumb and forefinger, and pocketed what was left of it.

“Three days,” Anthony said, “one kilo. Unexpected yet very welcome early release.”

“And records?”

Anthony grinned. “Records are written by the victors, Zee. They’re kept by suckers.”

Brian made a small sound, acquiescing, and let his leg bounce nervously under the table again.

“What about the fight?”

“Enjoy yourself,” Anthony shrugged. “Enjoy your business. It should be quite the show.”

For a moment they stayed sitting, just two inmates calming talking away their boredom in the middle of the crowded mess. Then Anthony stood, patted himself down to check he’d not forgotten anything, and set his unfinished cigarette in his mouth.

“My best to Jimmy, as always.”

Brian watched him go, tamping down his excitement as best he could. He was suddenly looking forward to the fight that much more.

They hadn’t made a competition out of it, but Will had been amused to see if he could follow the rigorous routine that Matthew Brown put himself through in the yard before the fight that evening. It was quickly clear that while Will kept himself in good shape and maintained it to stave away boredom, Matt Brown kept himself in shape for his vanity.

And Will could hardly argue that there wasn’t anything to look at; he just had no reason to look.

He kept up for as long as he felt he wanted to, and then he took his usual bench to watch Matthew finish out the rest alone. Tellingly, the man Matt would be fighting wasn’t there, perhaps confident in his size and his brashness to overpower the slighter that evening.

Will thought it unlikely. He understood easily the vibrating anger that through kinetic energy alone seemed to increase one’s strength, knew how the tang tasted on the back of his tongue when he ached for a fight, even if it was just to smash his hands repeatedly against an unyielding wall. Brown would be a blizzard that evening, an avalanche of pent up rage. This fight wasn’t a need to *win* for him, and that made him that much more dangerous; a man with nothing to lose gave everything he had.

Will had stayed in the yard long enough for the sweat to dry his hair to his neck. He stayed as long as he could weather Cordell's gaze against his skin.

The shower was thankfully uneventful.

He spent his afternoon arguing philosophy with Hannibal; himself at the table, Hannibal relaxed in his bunk looking down. There hung a blissful tension between them, a comfortable pull from one to the other that both expertly enhanced and avoided; there was much more gratification after delay, for both. Will smoked, politely tapping the ash into a mug to avoid dirtying the table. Once in a while he’d let his hand slip, let ash land delicately on the scratched surface, just to see Hannibal’s eyes immediately hone in on the mess.

“You can’t possibly be a follower of Jaynes’ theory,” Will drawled, pressing the side of his thumb against the offending ash before bringing it to his mouth to suck clean.

“It is no more illogical than other theories brought forward,” Hannibal replied, tilting his head to watch Will’s fingers work over the filter of his cigarette. “Some people still believe they hear the voice of God. Entire wars are waged over the interpretation of those conversations.”

“God is a kid with an ant farm,” Will scoffed, sighing a plume of smoke towards the ceiling. “God is a wonderful excuse, an easy scapegoat, when one doesn’t want to take ownership of the consequences of their own making.”

“So you believe consciousness to be only in the mind?”

“Everything is in the mind,” Will shrugged, stubbing out his cigarette and stretching his legs out before him, long and languid. “You damage enough nerves up there you stop feeling pain, you stop feeling fear, you stop acting like yourself and become something else entirely. If bicameralism was really at work, shouldn’t those with frontal lobe damage remain as they were before it? Just as human, just as *moral*?”

Hannibal regarded him fondly, eyes narrowed in pleasure and pulse warm beneath his skin. In their acquaintance, Will had not only proven himself well worthy of Hannibal’s attention, but had elevated himself even beyond initial expectations. Dry, crass, jaded; incredibly clever man.

“And those who were not moral before?” Hannibal prompted. “Those who were not human?”

Will’s eyes flicked to meet his and his jaw ticked a beat of irritation, of a challenge sensed in the air.

“An entire smorgasbord of them, just beyond the door, Doctor,” Will replied, low. “Every possible flavour of immoral.”

“What defines our morality, Will?”

“A molecule, if we’re to believe some,”

“What defines yours?”

Will’s smile was bright, sharp, a quick flash of teeth before he brought a hand to his face to draw fingers over his bottom lip. Neither had been particularly open in regards to their crimes, neither had pushed for more information.

“The nature of those whose minds I borrow,” he replied quietly after a while. “Changing them, on, off, like a pair of socks, over and over. One sick mind after another. None particularly palatable.”

“And in here?”

Will looked up again, aware of just how comfortable he was with the monster above him, aware of just how contented he was in this den of demons, exorcised from society for a time to *reform* and *repent*.

“Does it matter?”

“Humor my curiosity.”

Will showed his teeth again, another brief offer of white as his chest moved with a silent laugh. He shrugged, fingers splaying before curling against his face again.

“I killed a man,” he said, “slit his throat so savagely they carried him away in two pieces, blood seeping through even the protective plastic booties the paramedics wore, so full of it the carpet was when I was through with him. He had no chance to attack me first, and yet I claimed self defence. He had not seen me, heard of me, and died not knowing why his throat met with my vengeance, and I liked it.”

When Will cast his eyes up again, Hannibal’s were darker, wider, the pupils dilated as he listened.

“Two years,” Will continued, watching Hannibal now as he spoke. “For a moment of unbridled pleasure at taking a life. There is hardly morality beyond these walls, Hannibal. My act, my sentence, speaks to hedonism on a far deeper level than it does a moral conscience.”

“Why did you kill him?” Hannibal asked, voice low, soft, and Will’s pleasure unfurled as his body did.

“Because God told me to.” He grinned. "I reflect the monsters people try to hide from me. I become their sin eater. And I got hungry."

Will didn’t shift back as Hannibal pushed himself forward and landed silently on the floor. He didn’t do more than uncross his legs to allow Hannibal to stand between them as he came nearer. He moved his hand from his mouth only when Hannibal caught it, and tilted his chin up at Hannibal’s purred praise of him.

His body sang with it, that power he had held, that power he had never denied. Will opened himself to the man above him, around him, as vulnerable as a body on an autopsy table, and just as morbid. When Hannibal’s hand snagged in Will’s hair he moaned, loud and low and shivered beneath him. Someone called obscenities from outside. Someone whistled. Will drew his legs up and set his toes to the floor, framing Hannibal between raised knees as he arched up towards him.

“Remarkable boy,” Hannibal told him, turning Will’s face aside to bite, deliberate, against his jaw. “Proud and petulant thing.”

Will’s eyes glazed, pleasure thrumming through him at the contact, the softness, the *understanding*. He looked through the door, uncaring for the eyes that looked back, delighting in his feline pleasure against Hannibal.

Until he found those that seared into his soul like acid. The gaze that haunted him in the yard and hunted him into empty corridors. Will wondered if Anthony had made sense of the words, if they'd meant anything at all.

“And yours,” Will reminded Hannibal quietly, words directed as much at him as at Cordell, who watched impassive, indifferent, the obvious display of possessiveness before him from across the prison.

The sound Hannibal made was more felt than heard, and Will draped an arm around him to draw him closer, closing his eyes against the threat beyond the door. There was an hour, perhaps, before the fight was to begin, before the tables were to be cleared from the mess for space to be made, and Will wanted more than that. He dropped his hand between them and stroked hard against Hannibal’s cock.

“Do you become those you devour?” Will whispered. “Even for a time?”

“I elevate them,” Hannibal replied, “beyond their mortal abilities, through myself.”

Will snorted, pressing his nails to Hannibal’s scalp. “God, you’re a prick.”

Hannibal’s answering laugh was swallowed by Will’s kiss as he leaned into him, hand still between them, teasing, promising, welcome. When he pulled away he watched Hannibal, deliberately let him go, and raised an eyebrow until the other stepped away, contented to look at Will hard and flushed before him.

“I want to place a bet,” Will told him, watched Hannibal’s mouth work to prevent the smirk from building into something warmer on his features.

“By all means.”

Will pushed himself up, not moving to adjust his clothing, to finger-comb his hair. He considered Hannibal through hooded eyes.

“Will you watch the fight?”

“I’ve never been a fan of blood sport,” Hannibal replied, relishing the grin the answer brought to Will’s features. “But I can make an exception.”

Will shook his head. “You’ll have something better to watch,” he promised, moving out onto the balcony and leaning on the railing. He bent, a slow and cat-like motion, and groaned as he stretched; cock still hard between his legs, hair dishevelled and clothes tugged every which way. He met Cordell’s eyes when he straightened up again, and held the gaze, though he felt sick doing it.

Nothing had befallen them, any of them, that brought to mind the cool patience of a sniper preparing to take pleasure in a kill. Nothing had made Cordell's convoluted prediction a prophecy.

Not yet.

When Hannibal followed him out, Will deliberately leaned back against him, tilted his head to accept the rough claiming nuzzle the older man gave him before moving away, his own business to attend to. Will watched Cordell until he couldn't anymore, his stomach turning at the very thought of being anywhere near him, even by proxy of a gaze.

But he felt his eyes on him as Will moved down the balcony, took the stairs to the floor above, hanging heavy against his ribs like an albatross at sea.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

They hadn't made it to Will's bed. They hadn't even tried for Hannibal's. Clothes falling away like snakes shedding skin Will had backed Hannibal up to the base of his bed and straddled him, catching Hannibal's hand to push two fingers into his mouth, watching him the entire time. Outside, Hannibal could level anyone with a look. The man parted crowds like the red fucking sea. But in here, between them, Will had him entirely at his disposal. Here, Will owned him.

I believe it was Hitchcock who said to write one's love scenes like fight scenes, and one's fight scenes like love scenes? So I did both in one chapter.

Chapter Notes

They finally did iiiiiiiit

Anthony was not a fan of boxing. He never had been. And as the crowd gathered and circled around the two men preparing to beat the shit out of each other, he pulled a cigarette from behind his ear and sought for a matchbook in his pocket. He was out here, at the bottom of the damn stairs, because he'd promised Matthew he would be, not because he wanted to be.

And because at least *one* of them had to watch to see if this part of the plan fell into place or floundered, and Hannibal could hardly be trusted with that particular mission when he was thinking with his dick. And Brian was busy.

Anthony occupied himself attempting the perfect smoke ring as the noise grew around him. Matches ran for three rounds in here, no rules, no limits. The only time someone would break a match up was if death was a genuine possibility, and even then sometimes guards held back. It wasn't that Anthony was *expecting* Matt to die… more that he wasn't looking forward to the clean up that would inevitably follow.

If he didn't get that tooth, they were fucked. If this part of the plan failed, they were fucked. In short, if Matty got fucked today? They were fucked.

Anthony wasn't nearly high enough for this.

He'd pulled Hannibal into his cell not long after Will stumbled from it, blood dripping down his chin, and passed on Cordell's unwelcome missive.

“He’s made threats before.”

“Of course he has. And he will continue to after we’re gone, but that’s if we fucking manage to leave,” Anthony replied. “Three on a match, Hannibal, he knows. He’s been watching like the creepy fucker he is and you’ll admit we have been far from fucking subtle.”

“What does he want that he can’t take?” Hannibal asked him, setting his hands to the table, fingers drumming against the surface. “He holds monopoly on drugs and trade.”

“Just trade,” Anthony muttered, offering Hannibal an exasperated shrug when he looked askance. “I’ve been in here longer than you, I had to find *something* to occupy myself.”

“Goddammit Dimmond.”

“Drugs are easy, forget drugs. Zee can get him his fucking drugs like he always does, but *think about it* Hannibal. That’s not it. That’s not what he wants from you.”

“From me?”

“Of the three of us involved, who has something filth like Cordell would be interested in?” Anthony asked him, stepping closer. “Brown’s fought him off before, he’s not worth the fucking effort. I’m well past their age restriction and he doesn’t fuck with you. *Who’s left*?”

Anthony glanced up through the throng of inmates to the balcony and sought out Will, up on third, forehead to forehead with Brian. Poor clueless boy. Anthony had hardly cared or even noticed him before Hannibal had gotten it into his head that he wanted Will Graham, but it was far from a secret that his first few months inside were fraught with unwanted sexual advances. He was too old for Farm recruitment but Will had stepped on Cordell’s pride with his resistance, he’d made a deadly enemy by refusing to bend.

And now he was a liability caught between all of them, and Cordell was walking a thin fucking line, threatening what Hannibal had claimed as his. Men of their power fought cleanly through proxies, no violence would come of this behind bars, but beyond them… if they managed to get beyond them.

He pressed the cherry to ash between his fingers and tossed the butt into the mess of people surrounding the two boxers. Matty and his stupid vendetta. Anthony would have happily sat through a dozen more years before filing an appeal on grounds of incurable disease or something as equally inarguable. But no. Stupid shit had to get his damn revenge, and now he was going to get his ass handed to him by a goddamn Aryan with a diamond tooth.

Anthony stretched his legs out as much as he could and dropped his head back with a sigh. He vaguely heard the shouted commentary of whoever had taken the floor this evening announcing the start of the first round and let his eyes close as the crowd screamed their approval.

In the ring, Matthew was wired.

He'd spent the morning working his body to a numb sort of pain before seeking Anthony out in his cell. There, he'd found himself immediately pinned to the wall with a hot mouth around his cock, which had been quite the motivator. As had the hit of coke Anthony had palmed him as he'd kissed him stupid and shoved him out the door right after. He'd saved that for just before the fight and could fucking taste colors with how pure the shit was.

As if Anthony wasn't addictive on his own, the bastard.

He only vaguely heard the call for the fight to start and didn't strike first. The guy before him was enormous, a lumbering mess of a human being. It would be the same as punching a brick wall for the duration of three rounds if Matty went after him first. No, his tactic was to exhaust him, to evade him, to allow himself to play fucking dead so that he got close enough for what Matt was really here for.

But at the same time… he was mad. He was real fucking mad. He had been for days, for weeks before this and now he had a legitimate person to take it out on, why should he hold back? Why should Matt fucking Brown hold back when he could skin this guy alive with his teeth? He reevaluated his approach, ducked a few predictable swings and lashed out.

Fuck it. Three rounds? He'd do thirty.

Will caught the start of the fight as he was making his way back down to the second floor, his bet placed, his pack of cigarettes half filled with joints of Brian's own design. He had no interest in the fight, though he had to admit the way Matthew was absolutely decimating a man twice his size was impressive to watch. He hadn't bet against him.

Will slipped past the inmates leaning over the railing and made his way to his cell in no particular hurry; but when he was yanked into it by a rough hand in his hair he could hardly complain.

"Placed your bets?" Hannibal purred against him, shoving Will up against the wall, out of sight of anyone not invested in the boxing match below. The other grinned.

"I did." Will lifted his chin, eyes narrowing. "Not watching the fight?"

"I was promised an alternative more to my tastes."

"Hope it doesn't disappoint," Will murmured, setting his leg between Hannibal's to pivot, and pushing against him until their positions were reversed. "Stay there."

There was something primal that sang through Will; perhaps the fight, the call for blood, the hunger for it. Perhaps the tension of the last few days that had built up to a scream he couldn't seem to release no matter how hard he tried. All he knew was he wanted to sink to his knees in front of Hannibal Lecter and suck his cock.

So he did.

Will was always a man who knew how to get what he wanted.

The hand that landed in his hair was harsh and he welcomed the sensation with a low whine of pleasure. Eyes up, he could see Hannibal watching him back, and so Will flattened his tongue, opened his throat, and took Hannibal to the hilt. He wanted this. He wanted him. He wanted to be claimed and owned and taken and he wanted it goddamn yesterday. He held Hannibal in his throat as long as he could before pulling back, uncaring for the slick strands of spit that connected his lips to the tip of Hannibal's cock, uncaring that they snapped and landed wet against his shirt and the floor. He took the head of Hannibal's cock between his lips and *moaned*.

There was power, genuine power, in holding a man as powerful as Hannibal absolutely in thrall, and Will knew he did. Hannibal watched him any chance he got, he stood near, he reached to touch, to take, to give. Conversations and tempting whispers and hot hands, and Will was aching for it. He dropped a hand between his own legs to stroke himself, laughing low when Hannibal slapped him in reprimand.

With a grin he pulled back.

"You do it then," he whispered, hoarse. A smooth motion and they were face to face again, Hannibal's thumb pushing Will's bottom lip out of shape before Will took the digit between his teeth to suck it instead. "Everything you fucking want from me, take it."

"All of you," Hannibal promised him, "everything."

He pulled his hand free and kissed Will instead, framing his face, grasping his hair, bending him into an arch until they were rutting together and breathless. If Hannibal had to make his claim clear again, he would do it. In the open, where anywhere could hear were they to listen over the racket below, he would take Will Graham apart.

He held Will still as he bit another bruise into his neck, another under his jaw, a third behind his ear. Each darker than the last, each eliciting the sweetest sounds from the man against him. He was his, *Hannibal's*, as long as both were incarcerated Will belonged to no one else. And outside? Hannibal supposed Will would be allowed to consider it a choice, if it eased his pride.

"You're mine," he reminded Will in a whisper, one hand seeking down beneath the waistband of his pants as the other fisted in his hair. "By your own accord and offer."

"Yes," Will breathed, eyes so dark they weren't blue anymore. He rutted forward, arched his back, freed a moan between gritted teeth and tore at the buttons of Hannibal's shirt as he held him. With a grin, Hannibal grasped him close and turned them again, slamming Will up against the wall once more.

Below, the first round held Matt the victor. He'd taken enough hits to sport a fetching spray of blood down his chest where his nose bled to and was grinning; mad with the high of adrenaline and white powder.

The Aryan, in contrast, did not look worse for wear, though Matt had managed to pin him for long enough for someone to slap a three-count to the floor and the round to be called. He

wasn't happy. Some snot of a kid half his size was kicking his ass and he couldn't have that. Not today not fucking ever.

He didn't wait for the second round before plowing right into Matt and locking a thick arm around his neck. If he didn't make it to the third round the fight would be bust, neither the winner or the loser and no one to say he'd gotten his ass handed to him by some little faggot thief.

Be he would.

He would get his ass handed to him.

Because the last thing Matt was thinking about was losing, the last thing he was even considering was giving up, and the marks his nails left bloody on the tattooed arm that held him were just a taste of what he was capable of today.

He squirmed, drawing his knees up to his belly before deliberately kicking back and down, catching one heel against the man's groin, the other just under his knee, and when he went down Matt didn't go with him. He caught himself on all fours and scrambled away just far enough to get his feet under him before taking a running leap back to the guy who hadn't even figured out how he'd fucking fallen yet.

Being ambidextrous came in handy; Matt had learned early that it was hard to fight a southpaw. So when he hit, he hit left-handed, and he hit hard. Three deliberate punches to the man's teeth and one with his right to his jaw. He saw the glint, for just a moment, as the tooth and the diamond it held landed on the dirty stone a few feet away, and grinned.

Job done.

Now he could have fun with it.

Will's moan mingled with the cry of the crowd below and he laughed. Hands curled in Hannibal's bunk above him he arched his back, pressed down harder against Hannibal's fingers that worked to stretch him.

They hadn't made it to Will's bed. They hadn't even tried for Hannibal's. Clothes falling away like snakes shedding skin Will had backed Hannibal up to the base of his bed and straddled him, catching Hannibal's hand to push two fingers into his mouth, watching him the entire time. Outside, Hannibal could level anyone with a look. The man parted crowds like the red fucking sea. But in here, between them, Will had him entirely at his disposal. Here, Will owned him.

And now, with two fingers curling up to find his prostate, the movement not eased much by spit, Hannibal bent forward to bite hard against the center of Will's chest, drunk on his own supplication.

He had heard Anthony's warning, he had heeded it. If Will had fallen to a hunt again, he needed to step in. If for no other reason than to remind the population at large that while Hannibal Lecter did not often exert his power, he *had it*. Cordell and the goddamn Farm

could look their fill but they would not lay a hand on Will Graham if Hannibal had anything to say about it.

And he would.

Loudly. Clearly. With perfect diction, if it came to it.

He relished the shudder that moved through Will as Hannibal's fingers continued tormenting Will's prostate, enough to pull those sweet wanton noises from the man astride him. Will hung almost suspended above him, muscles tight in his arms as he ducked his head to watch Hannibal's hand move between his legs.

He was extraordinary.

Hannibal wanted to eat him alive.

"Three?" he asked, watching Will slowly shake his head, teeth seeking his bottom lip to bite against as his eyelids flickered and Hannibal withdrew his fingers. "Brave."

"Stupid," Will countered, amused. He allowed himself to settle his weight on Hannibal and pulled him in to kiss.

Because this was stupid. What was this, if perhaps not the most stupid thing Will had ever done? He was opening his body, his mind, to a killer. He was making himself vulnerable for a man who could - with a mere blink - have Will gone from the earth with no records left behind. He was kissing Hannibal like he wanted to kiss no one else and it was stupid because in that moment it was true. Beyond these walls, beyond this goddamn mess, he *wanted* to see Hannibal again. He wanted to find a way.

And Will was always a man who knew how to get what he wanted.

He dropped his hand between them to stroke Hannibal, pressing their foreheads together as both groaned in pleasure, breath hot between them and lips parted too wide to kiss. Outside, people were stamping their feet, whistling, screaming, calling names and bets and curses to the fighting below. And in this cell, together, Will spat into his hand and spread it over Hannibal's cock before grasping the bunk above them again to pull himself up.

It was a painful breach, they took it slow. Will shuddering through the pressure, Hannibal easing a palm up and down Wil''s chest too soothe him, his other hand held tight around Will's hip, guiding him down. He considered for a minute how this was a conquest others had expected him to have made months ago, when Will had first entered the cell, when Will had offered his throat and moaned his submission.

How hollow that victory would have been, had Hannibal taken advantage then.

Because now, he had Will willing, he had him open and whimpering and begging to be fucked, and he was *radiant*.

By the time Will had Hannibal deep in him, there was a sheen of sweat over his chest, curls sticking to his forehead that Hannibal swept away and grasped in a fist. Will met his eyes,

narrowed his own, grinned. The challenge was clear, the offer open.

Everything you fucking want from me, take it.

Will kept one hand on the bunk above, as much to balance himself as to avoid cracking his skull on the frame when he moved. The other he twined through Hannibal's hair, drew over his throat, down his chest, against his nipples.

"Been thinking about this a while?" Will asked him, and smiled amused when Hannibal allowed that he had. "Why not take it then?"

"Willingness tastes sweeter," Hannibal replied, his voice rough with pleasure as Will arched up off his lap and sunk back down, deliberate and slow, muscles tight around him. "Good things come, as the saying goes."

"Do they?"

"Are you good?"

Will grinned, wicked. "Make me come and I will be."

So Hannibal did, biting his claim into Will's chest and shoulders as Will rode him, the creaking of the flimsy frames swallowed in the storm of sound beyond the door. They fucked with the desperation of drowning men, clinging to each other, scratching marks against familiar skin they could claim as their own. Sweat and spit stung the reddened marks and neither cared. Not about that.

They found a rhythm and lost it, Will's head falling back in pleasure as Hannibal took his cock in hand to stroke, thumbing the sensitive head over and over until Will's movements stuttered and his entire form tensed with his orgasm.

He panted pleasure against Hannibal's cheek, opened his mouth when Hannibal fed him his own seed before kissing Will hard enough to steal his breath. And when he'd recovered enough to see straight again Will tilted his head and bit his own mark against Hannibal's throat, dark and sharp as he fucked down against him, coaxing him to his own release.

Matt was seeing stars. The high he'd ridden was wearing off and his body was on the verge of collapse and the last round hadn't been called yet. He was shaking, he was sweating, he was covered in his own blood and that of his opponent and if he were honest he wasn't even sure how he was still conscious.

A punch landed hard against his temple and he damn near bounced off the ground when he landed. He had enough sense to reach out to grasp the tooth and palm it before he was lifted up and struck again. This time, he just stayed down - it didn't take much effort. He was vaguely aware of more punches against him, of the noise around him, of the cloying smell of Anthony's cigarettes that proved he was at the damn match even when he'd sworn he wouldn't come.

The round was called, the Aryan declared the victor, and Matty could not care less. He waited for the guards to grab him up, arms under each of his to he hung between, and forced himself to look around, to find him, to *see* him -

And Anthony watched, still on the bottom step, a cigarette behind his ear and one between his lips. He caught Matt's eye - the one not swollen shut - and offered a smile when Matt brought his tongue up to draw over a tooth; the equivalent in his own mouth of the one he'd won for their escape.

Good boy, Anthony mouthed, and watched as the younger man preened, for just a moment, his grin bloody and bright, before promptly passing out as he was carried to the infirmary.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

> *“I’m making what is possibly the most primitive hand held torch since the thirteen-eighties,” Anthony replied, holding the match until it nearly burned his fingers before blowing it to smoke. “But bacon grease and old bedsheets burn well enough to serve the purpose we need.”*
>
> *“The hell did you get bacon grease?”*
>
> *“Stole it,” Anthony grinned.*

Chapter Notes

> **Chapter warnings**: mentions of sexual assault.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Matt woke to the smell of a home-cooked meal and wondered just how hard he’d been hit on the head the night before.

He didn’t remember much. He remembered grabbing up the tooth, he remembered Anthony, and then a bit of a blank before he’d woken up to Jimmy grinning down at him in the infirmary.

“You got your ass handed to you,” he’d said, delighted. Matt had managed little more than a groan in answer. “Honestly, a very good political move on your part. And -” he gestured to Matt’s body, “it looks worse than it is. No major broken bones. A few fractures but what’s a fracture or two to a guy like you? You still have all your teeth - couldn’t say the same for the other guy. And I’ve set your nose back.”

“You said I didn’t break anything.”

“You didn’t break any *major* bones,” Jimmy repeated. “The nose is mostly hyaline cartilage and soft tissue where it matters. The bit that broke mends itself easily enough. You’ll make pandas jealous for a few days though.”

Matt must have grumbled something. He knew that Jimmy gave him some pills, several that Matt was certain weren’t on the prescription list of the prison, and slipped something into his pocket before Matt was out cold again.

And then he'd woken here.

'Here' was not his cell. He knew it wasn't his cell because he shared a cell, and his shared cell wasn't covered in fucking books. With a groan he dropped his arm over his eyes and sighed. Anthony must've managed him into his cell, somehow. Possessive bastard. Matt licked his lips with a dry tongue and cracked one eye open to look around.

The door was open, it was bright enough out there to suggest it was late in the day, and the noise level corroborated it. Anthony sat at the table, glasses halfway down his nose as he -

"What the fuck are you doing?" Matt mumbled, closing his eyes again and trying to find the will to sit up properly. He felt like he'd been run over by a train. At the table, Anthony clicked his tongue and set aside… whatever the fuck it was. Matthew heard him moving closer and turned into the cool palm against his face without actually meaning to.

"There you go, mate, breakfast of champions," Anthony told him, holding the back of Matt's head as he pressed a cup to his lips.

"What is it?"

"Water."

He drank, thirsty as all hell, and when he finally managed to open his eyes, Anthony smiled at him.

"You were out fourteen hours," he said, taking the cup away and keeping Matt up still as he reached for the pitcher to refill it. "Stayed in the infirmary til you woke up again - though I doubt you'd remember, with the stuff Jimmy got into you - and now here we are."

"What time is it?"

"Nearing four."

"Jesus."

Anthony snorted. "Not quite." He offered Matt more water, took the cup away when Matt frowned into it and shoved his glasses up his nose with his knuckle before carefully studying Matt again. "You certainly put on a show."

"Jimmy says I lost."

"Yeah, he kicked your ass," Anthony agreed. "But it was one hell of a fight, so I hear."

"You were there."

"I was spiritually present," Anthony shrugged, standing up and returning to the table again. "Didn't watch. Not really my cup of tea."

"What are you doing?" Matt asked him, wincing as he sat up. Anthony struck a match against the table and let it catch before holding it beneath a strip of fat to melt it. Matt watched it drip

into another cup that Anthony had somehow nailed to an old leg of a chair.

That explained the breakfast smell.

“I’m making what is possibly the most primitive hand held torch since the thirteen-eighties,” Anthony replied, holding the match until it nearly burned his fingers before blowing it to smoke. “But bacon grease and old bedsheets burn well enough to serve the purpose we need.”

“The hell did you get bacon grease?”

“Stole it,” Anthony grinned. “My plate, Hannibal’s plate, Will’s plate. MacGyvered us something useful from general waste.”

Matt blinked at him. Anthony rolled his eyes.

“Before your time, I’d imagine, that show. Disregard it, young one, it is wisdom beyond your years.”

“Prick.”

Anthony didn’t argue it, offering a brief narrowing of his eyes in lieu of a full smile before returning to his work. Matt noticed three more similarly cobbled-together things littering the table. His stomach ached for food. The rest of him ached from being beaten the fuck up.

“You have any actual bacon?”

“Doesn’t keep, I’m afraid,” Anthony sighed, flicking another used match to the tabletop before tilting the torch a little to spread the melted grease evenly. “Nor does whatever they attempt to pass off as chicken. But there should be a sorry excuse for a burger near the bed somewhere for you.”

Matt snorted, cursed when it hurt his nose, shook his head and checked. There was, in fact, a burger there for him. Cold, now, but he could hardly care with how ravenous he was. With a grunt he moved to take it up, sitting back against the wall as he ate and watched Anthony work.

By the time he’d finished, Anthony was onto his second torch.

Matt shifted enough to reach into his pocket, finding the hard-won tooth there with its diamond, as well as a heavy key that he held up with a raised brow for Anthony to look at.

“Chapel.”

“Right. Didn’t know someone had pressed it.”

“A magician never reveals his tricks,” Anthony replied, scrunching up a bit of fabric to press into the bottom of the cup he was working on. “You have the rest of the stuff you need to make whatever it is you need to?”

“Yeah, should do.” Matthew fingered the key a moment more before putting it back into his pocket. He’d hide it behind the grate in his cell with the screwdriver and the rest of the stuff he’d pilfered from Anthony over the last week or so. “I’ll work on it tonight.”

“Sleep til then,” Anthony told him, looking up when Matt made a displeased sound. “You look like shit and most likely feel just as bad. Sleep. Who the fuck am I to judge you?”

“Got better shit to do.”

“Yeah well, ‘better shit’ is busy right now so you might as well nap til it’s finished what it’s doing.”

Matt groaned, brought a hand up to run through his hair as he regarded Anthony at his work. Terrible jokes and filthy mouth aside, Matt was grateful he’d woken up here, rather than in his own cell or the infirmary once Jimmy was off shift. He hated to admit it, and he never would to anyone else, but he felt oddly safe with Anthony. The man never asked anything of him that Matt wasn’t already prepared to give him, even if he had to be coaxed to admit it to himself. He was funny. He was clever. He was a right proud bastard. Matt could respect that.

So he just shrugged and lay down again, keeping his half-open eyes on Anthony til they closed and he slept again.

Will woke sore and very pleased with himself. He stretched with a groan and pushed himself out of his bunk to relieve himself and wash his hands and face in the freezing water from the sink. He could feel Hannibal watching him before he even turned to see, and Will grinned, drawing wet hands through his hair to attempt to tame it somewhat.

The cells weren’t open yet, a breath too early for it, and Will took the opportunity to fully stretch his form, not holding back the contented sounds he made as he did. He cursed in surprise when Hannibal’s arms wrapped possessively around his stomach and pulled Will back against him. The man moved like a phantom.

“We do this now?” Will asked, amused, and tilted his head for Hannibal to turn his own against him in a nuzzle. It felt strangely domestic, enough that it weighed on Will’s stomach like a stone, but he didn’t squirm free of the hold. The warmth was welcome after the consummation of so much teasing and play.

Will allowed Hannibal to hold him, accepted the nuzzling, the wet kisses pressed to his throat. He relaxed into it. He floated.

When the doors opened, he didn’t immediately spring away either. He turned in the curl of Hannibal’s arms and deliberately kissed him, deep and slow, before pulling away to leave the cell first, boots beating a rhythm down the metal stairs.

At breakfast, he relinquished his bacon to Anthony’s grabbing with a snort, pressed his thigh against Hannibal’s under the table. Then he went to the yard.

In truth, the day was like any other. Boredom drove him to pump his blood faster around his body, to stretch his muscles to their shaking limits in the sun outside. He dozed with his shirt scrunched up over his face and felt the cloying touch of Cordell's eyes on him as he did. He challenged himself to stay still, unresponsive to it, for as long as it took for the guards to change shifts midmorning.

Hannibal would be in the library, Will knew, trawling the shelves for books he hadn't yet read, or favourites he could read again, and Will refused to waltz in there smelling like sweat and sand.

Showers were timed and scheduled, but some sweet talking, a bribe or two, and once in a while Will could barter himself the shower room in the middle of the day if the right guard was on. He rarely pushed his luck like this, he knew it would run out eventually. He hadn't the pull Anthony and Hannibal had in here, and he refused to use their power for cover when he could earn his own. Today was only the third time he'd done this, since his incarceration, and the guard at the door took his usual three smokes and two of Brian's spiffs in payment before shoving the door open for Will with his hip.

There were no dividers in the shower room. It looked like a massive garage with pipes crisscrossing above a rough stone floor, spigots at even intervals that served as showerheads. Drains in the floor, rough-hewn shelves older than Will nailed to the walls that held the hard soap the prisoners had access to. It was practical; it served its purpose.

Will hit the lever by the door that set the entire enterprise going and yanked his clothes off.

The white noise was welcome. All the showers going at once filled the room with steam quickly, and Will stepped up under the spray. He made quick work of his hair, filled his mouth with the sour water and spat it free. He didn't hear the door open again. He didn't hear anyone come in. He didn't hear much, actually, beyond the thick thud of something striking the side of his head before he caught himself hard against his knees on the floor.

"Mr. Graham, a pleasure, as always."

Will was disoriented, his head was throbbing and his ears were ringing and the steam made it hard to focus on anything properly. He was dizzy and too-hot, and sick, and all he knew was that he was alone in the goddamn showers with Cordell Doemling and that was really, *really* not good.

He tried to shuffle backwards, found his back pressed up against someone's shins and cursed, canting sideways instead.

This was too much like his first few weeks in prison. This was something Will had deliberately worked to shove to the very back of his mind, over and over, when he woke in a cold sweat in his bunk. And he was back there, again, he was fucking *back there*.

A fist caught in Will's hair and yanked his head back as another arm wound over his throat just beneath his chin. Someone else caught his legs - two others - and held him open and prone under the rushing water. Will could make out the shape of Cordell in front of him and

instinct kicked in to fight his way the fuck out of there. Using the water to slip from one grasp, to kick out, to thrash and bite and scratch at whoever was holding him.

He didn't know where the punches came from, he didn't know how many of them there fucking were, but he was quickly subdued again, as before, only this time the arm that had choked him was yanking his elbows together behind his back and Will *couldn't move*; he couldn't fucking move.

"Now, now, none of that, Mr. Graham. We're both men of action, such things do not become us."

"What the fuck do you want?"

"I am merely collecting the sniper's toll," Cordell replied, moving to stand between Will's spread legs. "I must thank you for passing my message on. Much obliged."

"Fuck you." Will was shaking, he was in absolute panic and he had no idea what else to do. He refused to cry out for help, refused to drag guards into something that wasn't their fucking business. He wished - pathetically and childishly - that Hannibal was here, and he hated himself for it.

"One should not spit their vitriol at the debt collector, when it is the indebted to blame," Cordell told him, kneeling, now to be on Will's eye level. "Perhaps aim your filthy words at the man who felt you were worth less to him than the price of his freedom."

Will didn't understand. He didn't fucking understand and he could feel his breathing hitch, his chest rising and falling far too quickly to actually be taking in air. He bit down on any sounds that threatened to escape him and squeezed his eyes closed and sent his mind far, far away from the muggy showers and the bruising hands and the putrid breath of the man now close enough to Will to lick water from his cheek.

Will woke in the infirmary.

He immediately curled onto his side, making himself as small as absolutely possible beneath the thin blanket, and bit down on his arm as he finally let out a scream that had been building and building and building beneath his chin.

Chapter End Notes

For those interested in the little plotty details!!
- Hannibal went to the chapel back in chapter 3 after he and Anthony and Matt met for the first time for dominoes, he got the pressing of the key then
- Anthony passed the pressing on to Will in chapter 5 when he went to the infirmary with a split lip, where Jimmy turned the pressing into a key that he passed back with

Matty this chapter :)
- Anthony's been stealing bacon grease from the beginning of the fic, collecting it to melt into torches he's now making ^^

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

“Something happened.”

“Something always happens, Hannibal,” Will replied icily. “This place is a goddamn carnival.”

Chapter Notes

tick-tock, tick-tock

Will hadn’t stayed at the infirmary long. He was cleared to return to his cell well before dinner, and that was exactly what he did. He didn’t look for Hannibal at the library. He didn’t go to the yard, or the mess hall, or anywhere but his own bunk, where he shoved himself back to sit against the wall and stared at the door.

He’d become an expert early in life in compartmentalizing aspects of his experiences. He’d set aside the early assaults in a vault he never accessed, and he would add this one to the same place and secure it away. But there was something that ate at him, that had eaten at him since the moment Cordell spoke and Will shut his body down to anything but life-sustaining impulses.

He’d been sold out. Or Cordell wanted him to believe he had been. But Will had read nothing on Hannibal to suggest he’d considered Will a bargaining chip, nothing to suggest that he’d groomed Will to be used this way. He had hardly let his guard down since being incarcerated, Will was certain he hadn’t missed anything.

And yet he sat here, exhausted, in pain, and trembling despite his best efforts, because of something *Hannibal* had done. He was suffering something Hannibal had promised to keep him safe from *because* of him.

Every noise a little too loud beyond the door made Will jerk. Every laugh too harsh made him wince. Any time footsteps neared the cell he curled into himself and waited, poised to kick out should Cordell have decided to try again.

But it was never him.

After a while the noise centered in the mess hall as dinner was called. Will didn't move. He kept his eyes open and blank to the wall in front of him and picked at the side of one thumb with the other. One leg he coiled under himself, to try and ease the pain between his thighs, and his other supported his wrists against his knee. His fingers trembled when he stopped moving them, so he didn't stop moving them. When he'd broken the skin at one thumb he moved to pick at the other, uncaring that he was smearing blood against his hands.

He didn't even notice until Hannibal was in the doorway, until he softly said Will's name and Will nearly jumped out of his skin in panic.

"*Jesus*." It came out as a hiss.

"Are you alright?"

"Fine. I'm fine. Just not fucking hungry." Will drew a hand over his face and winced when the skin pulled, cursing when he noticed the blood. He gingerly unfolded himself from his bunk to get to the sink to wash his hands and face clean of it. He flinched when Hannibal stepped nearer, despite himself. He bit back a raw sound of pain when Hannibal pressed up against his back and caught his reflection in the mirror.

"Something happened."

"Something always happens, Hannibal," Will replied icily. "This place is a goddamn carnival."

He turned off the tap and grabbed up the towel to keep his shaking hands out of view and found that he couldn't not lean back into Hannibal's comforting warmth, he couldn't believe that he would be the one to mastermind what happened today.

Perhaps he'd grown soft.

Perhaps he'd grown stupid.

Perhaps his affection for this monster was inconvenient, in the grand scheme of things.

He remained tense as Hannibal drew a hand through his hair, remained still as the palm stroked the skin of his cheek, down his throat and over his shoulder. He tried not to wince when Hannibal cupped the inside of his elbow, bruised and sore from where he'd been restrained the entire time Cordell had raped him. After that Will just closed his eyes and sighed, easing his weight against the man behind him, trusting he wouldn't move away.

He didn't.

Hannibal turned his face against Will's in a nuzzle, ducked it lower to breathe him in. And then he stilled as well, not quite as tightly wound as Will but wary, discontented. He set both palms warm against Will's hips and stood that way, poised as though hovering, as though covering Will with himself as neither said anything at all.

"I do hope I'm not interrupting."

Will jerked so hard from Hannibal's hold he hit his hip against the sink and immediately slid behind it as though something so flimsy would protect him from the voice that flayed him alive. He hadn't even realized he'd moved. He hadn't realized his shoulders had gone up and his hands had fisted at his sides and his teeth were bared even though his brows spoke of panic, not anger.

"What is he doing here?" his voice was barely above a breath, and Will was sure that if he didn't find a way to calm his breathing soon he would lose consciousness right there on the fucking floor. He didn't look at Hannibal. He couldn't. His eyes were fixed, focused, on the man darkening his goddamn doorway. Again. Back, again, already.

"Dr. Lecter and I have things to discuss, Mr. Graham," Cordell replied. "Perhaps you'd like to run along, be a good boy and find someone else's lap to warm for a while."

"I see no reason why Will should have to leave," Hannibal interrupted, tone clipped. "He has, after all, much more of a claim to the room than you do. And our business should not take long."

Cordell's jaw worked, eyes narrowing as he watched Will's every minute motion, trapping him like an animal in headlights with his look.

"No," he drawled after a while, blinking his gaze to Hannibal instead. "I don't suppose it should."

He gestured behind himself and one of the Farm boys crept up and leaned over his shoulder, eyes bugged out on whatever drugs were coursing through his system. He wasn't looking at anyone in the room, Hannibal wasn't even sure he understood where he was.

"Insurance," Cordell explained. "One can't be too careful, you understand, not in this economy and with such high stakes."

Hannibal hummed, displeased but uninterested in arguing. When he turned to the shelf above the sink he tried to meet Will's eyes and found the younger man livid. He'd seen Will upset before, he'd seen him unhappy. In the first few weeks, especially, he had seen him panicked. But he had never seen such wrath behind his eyes as he did then.

"Will."

"Don't." Will's jaw clicked as he ground his teeth together. "Don't. Touch me." he still hadn't looked at Hannibal, eyes fixed on the man at the door.

Hannibal didn't touch him. He continued to reach for what he'd been seeking on the shelf, wrapped carefully in a towel and in plastic beneath that. A brick of tightly packed powder, a promised kilogram that Brian had left earlier that day; a bargain struck with Anthony but honored by both of them. He held it out to Cordell.

"Will you test it yourself?" Hannibal asked. Cordell smiled, an expression that looked more fitting on a mask than a man.

“You would like that, wouldn’t you. No, no I think I’ll have Aaron try it for me. He’s been a very good boy, he deserves a reward for his hard work this week.”

Hannibal’s disgust showed on his face but he said nothing. He stepped nearer and offered the brick to the kid instead, who immediately reached for it like a starving orphan for bread. He cradled the brick against his chest, glanced up at Cordell for permission, and grinned when the nod was given. He shuffled off to the corner to set himself up and Cordell stepped further into the cell, amused when Hannibal mirrored the motion to keep himself between Will and Cordell.

“It is special, isn’t it?” Cordell mused, “the trust that can be found in such a place as prison? A place where secrets are currency, and being able to have none between yourself and another the ultimate freedom.”

“I have never known you to be sentimental,” Hannibal replied, a mere shift of his head enough to intercept Cordell’s glance aimed at Will.

“We all have our weaknesses,” Cordell shrugged. “Beautiful things bring me to consider mortality and the fragility of life. I’m certain you can relate to that, Doctor, with such a beautiful thing of your own.”

It took a lot for Hannibal not to move right then, not to take the steps needed to reach the intruder in his cell and eliminate him from it. Because this transaction was necessary, this transaction guaranteed them silence for another two nights until they’d be gone. This transaction would set in motion a chain of events that would poison not only the guts of the beast within this institution but the reputation protecting it.

So Hannibal did not move.

But Will did.

He lunged so quickly that neither of the men anticipated the motion, catching Cordell’s shoulder and felling both of them to the stone floor. Will didn’t let him react, he didn’t let him do anything before he reached for the first thing his fingers wrapped around and brought it down with all his force to Cordell’s face. He didn’t care that it was the chair. He didn’t care how cumbersome it was, how difficult it should have been to lift with one hand before his other caught it to help him balance and aim the blows better. He didn’t care that his voice was pulling from him in harsh cries and panting as he pummelled the man under him.

He only stopped when Hannibal pulled him back, one hand to the chair to catch it before it could fall again, one in Will’s hair, drawing his head back, his body following.

“Don’t touch me, don’t *fucking* touch me!” Will’s voice was so loud it rattled his skull and for a moment all he could do was press the heels of his hands to his temples and whine. “You and your *protection*, your *useless* fucking protection Hannibal.”

Behind him, the young Farm boy slipped from the cell with brick still in hand, uncaring for the state of his master. And Cordell… Cordell let out a rattled breath and rolled to his side. Hannibal caught Will across the chest as he tried to throw himself at him again.

“It won’t feel like killing me,” Hannibal whispered, his strength still where Will’s was manic, scratching against him, screaming for Hannibal to let him free so he could *end this*. “It won’t feel the same, and it will hurt you more, Will.”

“Will it?” Will wheeled about and shoved both hands against Hannibal’s chest, pushing him back a step. “Will it *hurt* me, Hannibal? Like he hurt me? Like he held me down and *fucked* me today? Again and again for something *you* did?”

Will was furious, eyes so wide it almost hurt to keep them open. When he blinked they stung. When he blinked again his vision was blurring.

“What did I buy you, Hannibal?” Will hissed, stepping closer. “What did I buy you with my trust in your *protection*?”

“Will -”

“At least tell me you planned it before you fucked *me*,” Will said, tears caught on his bottom lashes, trembling and not yet falling. “Because then, at least, I’ve only myself to blame.”

“Will.”

“What!”

By the time he turned, Cordell had already rounded the corner, and both he and Hannibal shoved their way towards the door at once. How he’d managed to push himself up, to move at all, was anyone’s guess. Will had cracked the chair against him so hard he’d hit stone beneath. Around them, the entire prison was silent, watching as Cordell dragged himself over the balcony, calling in slurred words for the Farm, the guards, Verger.

They watched as he made it to the stairs. They watched as he collapsed against them and fell, head over feet, over and over to the floor below, the resounding crack leaving no question as to what had finally caused his end.

Something in Will snapped, then, whatever fight had drive him slid from him like oil and he staggered back against the door of their cell and cursed.

“Fuck. Fuck, oh fuck.”

He’d gotten two years for murder once. He wouldn’t get two years for murder again. Not like this, in the open, with hundreds of witnesses and his screamed argument still echoing in his ears.

He didn’t notice Hannibal until the man had to yank his head up to meet his eyes. His voice was hazy, like it was underwater, and Will had to blink several times before he came into focus, the words mangling as they caught up.

“- to go.”

“What?”

“Will, you have to listen to me, they’re going to put you in solitary confinement while they investigate this,” Hannibal was saying, hands on either side of Will’s face, holding him focused. “They’re going to take you away but I will find you, I will get you, do you understand?”

“Why?” Will breathed. “Why - why did -”

“I will explain everything. I will make amends, if you let me, but right now you have to listen. You have to listen to me, Will, don’t struggle.”

“What -”

Hannibal kissed him, deep and long, and hot as he had the night Will had given himself to him, as aching now as it had been then, and Will whimpered when he was freed again. Confused, frightened, exhausted. He wanted nothing more than to kiss him again and disappear into it.

“Don’t struggle,” Hannibal whispered again, pressing a chaste kiss to Will’s lips before stepping away from him, hands up behind his head as guards flooded the cell and yanked Will’s arms behind him. Will cried out, hurting and panicked, squirmed long enough to meet Hannibal’s eyes again before he just went limp, just gave up, *listened*. He watched Hannibal as long as he could before he was dragged out the door, and then he couldn’t help it, he struggled, he kicked out, he tried to bite, to hit his head back against someone until a baton came down against his temples and he didn’t try again.

Hannibal didn’t follow the commotion to the balcony, he did nothing but stare at the smear of blood in the middle of the floor, at the chair beside it that still dripped viscera from one of the legs. He didn’t put his hands down until someone shoved hard against him, until a hand slapped him and he blinked himself back to the now.

“What the fuck did he do?” Anthony whispered.

“Will? He -”

“Not Will,” Anthony hissed, eyes sharp and French sharper, mouth pressed into a tight cruel line. “You’ve been alone too long, Hannibal. You’ve forgotten what compassion feels like.”

For a moment he said nothing more, just drew a hand through his hair and turned on the spot, staring for a moment at the mess left behind.

“We’ll have to leave tonight,” he said after a moment. “We can’t wait another two days like we planned, not with this shit upping security.”

“Are we ready?”

“We’ll fucking have to be,” Anthony sighed, pressing his fingers against his eyes before sniffing and looking up at Hannibal again. “You find a way to get him out of there and to the fucking chapel before lockdown, Hannibal, or so help me God I’m leaving you behind.”

Hannibal blinked at him, slowly inclined his head. Anthony nodded back, swallowed, and patted himself down until he found a cigarette.

“Being in love suits you.”

“Fuck off.” Anthony shook the match until it expired and tossed it to the blood at his feet. “Tell Brian. He’ll have to take over Brown in the laundry, coz that kid can barely keep his head on straight right now.”

Anthony sucked deep on the cigarette before tossing it to the blood too, uncaring that he’d just lit it. “And get Will,” he repeated. “Because we can survive without your safehouses, you can’t do shit without my papers.”

Anthony glared at his friend a moment more before nodding and moving to leave the cell, catching himself on the door to turn himself out.

Hannibal waited. Allowed himself a moment to catch his breath, to ease his heart rate, before stepping over the mess and making his way out towards the third floor.

Lockdown started in twenty minutes.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

They had to be silent.

They had to not exist.

The escape!

Chapter Notes

An ENORMOUS shout out to Mel who is a goddamn legend and the best beta reader the world could ever ask for. He cheered me through this entire chapter when I was certain it was boring and impossible to read so... thank you my dude.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Prisoner 244573 - Dimmond, absent from cell!

The alarm masked the sound of chipping cement but only just. Frantic strikes of metal to stone, over and over, as the noise echoed in the garage-sized chamber and two of them hammered away like their lives depended on it. Piece by piece, the old floor gave way to its rusted frame and Matt peeled back the drain cover before kicking through the remaining concrete, rubble falling to the ground below.

Prisoner 245819 - Zeller, absent from cell!

The sound was overwhelming now, too-loud and seeming to turn in on itself, like the mangling of an ambulance siren as it moved further away; out of tune and ugly. Will closed his eyes against it until someone yanked his shoulder to move him.

Prisoner 245643 - Brown, absent from cell!

To the drain. To the hole. To the floor beneath.

Prisoner 245990 - Graham, absent from cell!

He barely managed a glance to the broken plaster wall that led into the chapel before he was shoved headfirst into his unplanned and unexpected escape.

Prisoner 244592 - Lecter, absent from cell!

He hoped Hannibal wasn't far behind.

- twenty minutes earlier -

Brian was already out of his cell when Hannibal found him, as the rest of the prisoners were, he was looking over to see what the commotion was about, why guards had gathered at the bottom of the stairs, why everyone had been removed from the mess hall.

One look at Hannibal told him enough.

"Fuck me,"

"Get the laundry," Hannibal told him, standing close enough to hear, not to arouse suspicion. "Right now. I'll get Brown, we need his hands."

"Jimmy says he's really fucked up."

"Will's in solitary."

"What, Will? Graham? The fuck's he got to do with this?" Brian swallowed, considered the situation before them. Two days early. This was happening two fucking days early. And now someone else was part of the damn thing, with no knowledge of the plan at all and -

He licked his lips. "Brown got the key?"

"Chapel, yes."

"Right." Brian tapped his fingers quickly against the railing, a rainfall of noise lost in the general hubbub around them. "Twenty minutes."

"Just."

Hannibal gave him a look, Brian just blinked back, and they parted ways.

The hardware was with Anthony or Matthew; the rest of them needed to only bring civilian clothes. The drop wouldn't be difficult to fit into the short timeframe, but an unplanned rescue out of solitary...

He needed Brown. He needed him. Hannibal couldn't pick a lock, it wasn't in his skillset, and he wasn't about to put both Will's life on the line and the entire plan in jeopardy for his damn pride. From their cell, he gathered clothes for himself and Will, wrapped them in a sheet and bundled them tight, carrying the entire thing to Anthony's cell.

"Brian's at the chute," Hannibal said, setting the thing down on top of Anthony's papers. "Three minutes, give or take."

Anthony hummed his understanding, wrapping a torn piece of cotton between two mismatched metal bars. Matthew dozed half-upright on his cot. Hannibal didn't envy him the headache.

“I need to borrow him.”

“No you bloody well do not,” Anthony replied, casting his eyes over the tops of his glasses. “It’s your fuckup, you fix it.”

“Hence, Brown,” Hannibal explained patiently, meeting Anthony’s look with one of his own. “I don’t know that lock, I know this prison. If we’re detained, he won’t be the one holding them off.”

“Hannibal I swear to fuck -”

“I’ll do it.” Matt groaned, opening one eye to look between the two of them.

“*You* sit down before I knock you down,” Anthony muttered, turning to look at him. “Five minutes, Matt, five, between us getting through that goddamn drain and into the dryer and we need every brain cell of yours yet working to get there in that timeframe.”

“I said I’ll do it,” Matt replied, levering himself onto the floor with a wince. “Solitary lock is easy. Two minutes tops. And it’s on the same floor. I can do it with my eyes closed. We have time.”

“He said he’d do it,” Hannibal repeated, turning to his friend. Anthony’s jaw worked.

“Hannibal, if you think I won’t break your goddamn nose just because we’re on a deadline you are very wrong.” he continued to stare him down even as Matt passed, a placating hand between Anthony’s shoulders. He let his eyes flick to Matt’s back as he left the cell and stepped out onto the balcony and then sat up, catching Hannibal’s hand in a tight grip.

“You leave Will behind? I’ll leave you,” he reminded him. “But if you leave *him*?” Anthony’s breathing slowed, a deliberate and calm exhale before he let Hannibal go. “I will kill you.”

“I know.”

Anthony closed his eyes, brought a hand to rub against them beneath his glasses. “If you don’t get out of my sight right now, Lecter -”

“I know.”

- ten minutes until lockdown -

Brian took his time with the trolley, no one was ever in a rush on laundry duty anyway but he felt as though every goddamn eye was on him. He looked up at every chute, checking the thrower, and every time it wasn’t who he was looking for. There were three left before the laundry room and he couldn’t exactly turn around and take another swing.

No one was that keen on the goddamn laundry.

Another bundle from another anonymous face and Brian’s hands tightened around the handle. He had no idea what the fuck they would do if this didn’t happen in the space of the next two chutes. Everything was relying on this goddamn part being done right. This was why he

hadn't fucking volunteered for it in the first place. The last thing he wanted was to be the fuck up that caused this to fail, when he was already the third wheel.

Another bundle, but this one leveled down all the laundry beneath it, and Brian flicked his eyes up to catch Anthony's face in the hole above before he moved.

Good.

Thank almighty fuck.

The last bundle from the last chute landed soft and easy, covering the suspicious contents of the trolley that Brian rolled past the machines and out towards the dryers. No one cared. The guards didn't patrol this area and the inmates would be the last to rat on someone for something so small. He found a corner, and wedged it in, and left; up with the rest of the laundry shift out of the basement and to the first floor, the metal gate clanking closed behind them, two guards locking it down for the night.

- lockdown -

They crawled their way out of the air vents like ghosts, covered in dust so fine it stung their eyes. The clothes wound over their mouths helped only to a point, and as soon as they were able all of them had yanked them away to breathe clean air.

The room they found themselves in was cavernous, several storeys of empty space above them, ending at a huge circular window, as well as below. Staircases clung rickety and fragile to some of the walls, led off to small balconies for maintenance use. It looked like no one had been here for an age.

The reservoir was, in truth, fairly self-sustaining. The mechanisms built long ago continued to turn as they should, emptying the enormous vat twice a day, at six and six. The group made their way forward, following Anthony, to the rim of the vat and looking down. A low whistle from Brian echoed back at them several times over and Anthony glared at him until it went away, gesturing that any sound, however small, would reverberate here and most likely be heard down the vent they'd just escaped through.

They had to be silent.

They had to not exist.

Anthony gestured for the sack Will carried and he swung it down to rest between his feet. As he worked open the knot in the plastic, keeping it watertight.

From within, Anthony took one of the torches, and scraped a match against his pants to light it. There was enough light from the huge window above them to see by, but the torch made everything, including themselves, appear monochrome. Anthony held it aloft a moment, golden and bright, before hefting it over the side of the vat.

They watched it sail downwards, the flame growing smaller and smaller but not extinguishing, not dimming, and not hitting the ground.

Not for a long time.

The echo of impact reached them moments after it happened.

With a deliberate sigh, Anthony knotted the sack back up and passed it to Will, then moved towards the ladder that would take them into the belly of the reservoir.

The descent felt longer than everything before it. Will couldn't get his mind around the fact that less than ten minutes before he had been in solitary, that hours before that he had woken in the infirmary, raped and humiliated. He shook his head to clear that away. He didn't need it when his mind was rushing with more information than he could possibly handle at once.

Hannibal had made this happen. All of it. He had planned an escape Will knew nothing about, he had orchestrated Will's rescue. Will couldn't find it in himself, even now, to hate him for what Cordell did. An exchange had been planned, the rules of the agreement had been violated. Will was caught in the middle, unaware, unassuming.

At least, that's what he wanted to believe. What he needed to.

When Hannibal had opened the door to Will's cell Will had clung to him, kissing him so desperately he hated himself for it. His anger had petered out to nothing, his fear had overwhelmed him in the tiny lightless room and Hannibal, there, warm, alive, real, was all Will needed.

Hannibal had given no explanation, nothing beyond kissing Will back before shoving him down the hallway, following Matthew Brown to another door not halfway down. Will had turned though, at the door, saw Hannibal take down the guard he hadn't quite in capacitated when he'd come for Will, saw him stagger back against the wall, hand to his side and teeth bared in pain.

He hadn't seen much after that, he hadn't the time. There was the confessional, the cross Matt used to break down the flimsy wooden panelling, the showers -

Will looked down, a few rungs below was Brain, and lower still was Anthony, still climbing, no sign of the end at all. It felt like a descent into hell. Maybe it was. Will was still uncertain he hadn't dreamed the entire thing. His hands were frozen numb against the rungs of the ladder, he could see his breath every time he sighed out. In it, once in a while, a drop or two of water.

And then Will felt it, the cold strike of rain on his forehead, faster and faster until it was a shower, bone-cold and far too heavy.

"Shit!"

Will looked down, kept moving. Anthony cursed again and the word taunted them in endless echoes.

"Hurry up, hurry the fuck up!"

"How much further?"

“Just *move*!”

They moved. They moved because they had nowhere else to go, because above them the white noise of the water was mingling with shouting voices. They moved because they were near the end, surely they were near the end now.

Will felt the same panic choke him that had silenced him in the dryer, when they’d all pressed close as guards ransacked the room beyond, looking for them, and Matt turned and turned and turned his little diamond saw against the steel filter.

Something fell past him from above, a bit of debris caught in the ladder that had been shaken free by their frantic motions, by the heavy rain.

And suddenly, Will’s feet were on the ground and he was knee-deep in water and Anthony was grabbing his arm.

“We need that door open, we need to get it open,” he was pointing to where Brian was already struggling, a door at hip level with a wheel that unlocked it. “Will, if this place floods and we don’t get that door we are *fucked* do you understand?”

He nodded, he nodded and he moved because there was nothing else to do. He heard the splash of other bodies entering the water, Matt’s, Hannibal’s, heard the curses whispered between them, caught and mangled by the rain hissing down. He heard Brian make a helpless noise and shove his weight against the wheel damn near rusted shut before them and moved to help.

Above them, voices echoed, not yet in the reservoir but close. If they made it here, even to the outer lip of the reservoir with their guns…

“Fuck, fuck oh fuck,” Matt was panting, fingers spread and held above the water as though he could shove it back down. He didn’t move when Anthony told him to, he didn’t even look up until Anthony was in his face, framing it with his hands.

“Matt. Get your ass over to that door,”

“I can’t -”

“Right the fuck now, kid,”

“I can’t swim,” Matthew told him helplessly, eyes wide, looking through Anthony rather than at him. “I can’t fucking swim.”

Anthony looked at him, held him a moment longer, before drawing back a hand and slapping him across the face. “Then move,” he told him, slowly, clearly, “and help them get that fucking door open so we don’t fucking have to.”

Matt blinked, nodded, *moved*.

Water to his navel, now, licking at the bottom edge of the door and Will wasn’t sure if it was sweat or tears or rain on his face anymore and he didn’t care. They shoved against the door

together, first he and Brian, then he and Hannibal, and then Matt joined them.

The water rose to Will's ribs and he cursed, shoving his shoulder against the wheel under his hand for more leverage, groaning when he heard it shift, just a little, just enough, and cried out in triumph.

From above came a clatter of metal, of running feet, and harder, larger things rained down upon them from the sky.

Will didn't care that it was bullets. He didn't care that he was being shot at in a barrel like a goddamn fish. He cared only that the wheel had budged, just enough, and that when he and Matt tried again it moved a little further.

It took two turns more before the door gave, and Will yanked it open. Matt hoisted himself through first, crawling up the tiny passage to get out of the water. Will pushed Brian up to move next. Then Anthony. Then Hannibal. And when Will followed them, shoving their bundled sack through first, he pulled the creaking door closed and threw them into darkness.

Will felt like he had fallen into a dream again. The flickering torchlight was enough to see by but there wasn't much to see. For a couple of miles - and what felt like endless hours - they walked along well-cleared stone floors. No tilt to the path, no debris in the way; the part of the tunnels Anthony and the work crew had cleared all those years ago and that hadn't been touched since. The dust at their feet was thick enough to billow when they disturbed it, leaving literal ghosts of their footsteps behind them.

They shared the three remaining torches between them: Matthew and Anthony in front with one, Brian behind them with another, Hannibal and Will at the back, due to Hannibal's injury. Back far enough to still see their companions, but not within hearing distance.

But neither spoke, not even here. Not even when they could. Will carried the sack over his shoulder and the torch in his other hand and couldn't look Hannibal in the eye when he turned to check he was still beside him. He wanted to reach out. He wanted to set a hand to Hannibal's shoulder, their foreheads together, to rest for just a moment in the gloom and pretend -

Pretend that they were okay.

Up ahead, Anthony said something, the sound carrying but the words muffled by the enormous space around them. Will lifted the torch a bit higher, but it did nothing to reveal the ceiling - if there even was one - above. With a sigh, he lowered it again.

"I know you weren't -" Will started, bit his tongue. Tried again. "I wouldn't have told you about the escape either, if the positions were reversed. I mean. I understand why you didn't. You've known me, what, eight months? I know I don't mean shit, I know -" Will laughed, breathless, nervous, and shouldered the sack a bit higher up his back.

“But why me? Why did Cordell come to me with the message, with the threat?” Will swallowed, didn’t look at Hannibal, didn’t look anywhere. “I couldn’t have told him anything even if I’d wanted to.”

“Because in my pride, I forgot my promise,” Hannibal replied at length, voice tight with pain but level, quiet. “I had assumed any business he had with me he would take up directly. Instead he chose to take advantage of a vulnerability I have not had in a long time.”

Will hummed, a sound that vibrated in his throat and silenced all the other things he wanted to say. About vulnerabilities and promises and anger and guilt.

“I am sorry you had to suffer for it,” Hannibal added after a while, tone sincere and very tired. Will didn’t reply or reassure him. He didn’t know if he knew how. He didn’t know if he had that level of compassion in him just then.

They walked in silence a bit longer, long enough that the air changed around them, fresher, colder, shifting the flames rather than leaving them still as the passage before had.

“Rails,” Will murmured, holding the torch out to see if they’d reached them yet, but their feet remained on flat dusty stone. “I would have looked for you, after, if all that shit hadn’t gone down and you’d left without me.”

Hannibal made a questioning sound. “Would you?”

“To kick your ass about leaving me behind,” Will replied, offering a smile that was growing close to being genuine. “I’d miss our conversations too much.”

Hannibal took that in, let the words coil within him.

“I’d considered not going,” he offered back. “There is little out here that I did not have back there. Time passes just as slowly, stupidity is just as rampant.”

“Why?”

Hannibal shrugged. “To see what you would do,” he admitted. “Upon your release.”

“You think I wouldn’t have come to visit?” Will asked, amused. Hannibal smiled.

“I wanted to see if you thought I’d be worth breaking out of prison, after two years of acquaintanceship.”

WIll snorted. “Acquaintanceship, you pretentious shit.”

Hannibal’s smile widened just briefly before it morphed into a grimace of pain, and Will held the torch aloft to see how far behind the were from the others. A few dozen paces, nothing frightful. And the air was getting colder. They were getting closer.

It wasn’t long before they reached a broken wall, about hip-high, and clambered over. Across from them, maybe six feet, tracks bisected their path.

“Follow them but don’t touch them,” Anthony said quietly.

“Why?”

“They’re electrified.”

Matthew muttered something about the bullshit of electric trains and got an elbow in the stomach for it.

“What?”

“Move your ass.” Anthony told him, looking back at the others before checking his watch. “It’s about twenty to midnight. First trains run at five.”

“Why’s that matter?”

“Because, dear boy,” Anthony sighed, giving Brian a patient look. “Once the trains start *running* they will run us *over* if we share their tracks. And we have sixteen miles to cover, give or take, before they get the chance.”

“Right.”

“Mmm. Come on then.”

Everyone was tired. They walked in a group before splitting off into pairs again, then trudged onwards individually. Once in a while someone would trip, or curse, or a rat would scamper over the tracks, its shadow enormous in the light of their torches. Will passed the sack to Matt, handed his torch to Hannibal for a while to walk unencumbered.

They made slow progress, but they were moving.

He listened as Anthony talked about London, telling Matthew of the places he’d take him when they were out of the country, arguing with him when Matt claimed he wouldn’t go to goddamn England when he was finally free. Will laughed with Brian, quietly, as he told him about Banff, and how he and Jimmy would go there every three months to take a break from the big bad drug world.

He walked with Hannibal and didn’t talk about anything.

When Hannibal stumbled and Will caught his arm to balance him, he didn’t let go again, letting his hand drop to hold Hannibal’s loosely as they continued to move. Unspoken promises, perhaps. Tentative reassurances.

He thought he heard it first, or, perhaps, he’d been the only one to voice it, but when Will asked after the time and Anthony called back that it was six minutes til five Will grasped Hannibal’s hand tighter. If the rails were electrified for five, the surge could send sparks between them; all five of them caught in that space.

“We should head to the walls,” Will called back, Anthony voicing his agreement as they all moved carefully through the tangle of metal and stone towards the left-hand wall.

Perhaps it was a rat, perhaps something else; all Will knew was one moment he was paces away from the wall, and the next there was a harsh clanging sound and he was flat on his face in between two sets of rails, spitting scoria and blood. His torch had fallen, gone out, and he was out of the sphere of light the others provided.

“Fuck.”

“What happened?”

“Not sure.”

“Can you move?”

Will tried. Besides being sore, he wasn’t worse for wear, but when he tried to take a step he *couldn’t*. “I’m caught on something. Hang on.”

“Shit.”

“What?”

“It might be a rail switch.”

“A fucking what?”

“It doesn’t *matter*, Will!”

“Yeah?”

“What’s caught?”

“Uh,” Will felt about, blind, down his leg rather than over anything that could be metal. The sole of his boot rested against the rail but it was rubber, insulated. “I don’t know, I can’t see. Pants, I think. Bring a torch over.”

“Do you have a knife?”

“What?” Will turned to look over his shoulder. “We just escaped from *prison* and you’re asking me if I have a fucking knife?”

“Jokes aside,” Matt called, at least he thought it was Matt, their voices all sounded the same in the dark. “You’ll need to move quick, there’s a minute until the next train.”

“Well do *you* have a fucking knife, Brown?”

“Will,” Hannibal, this time, his voice Will would recognize anywhere. “Can you take them off?”

“Really?”

“Really.”

Will considered, drew his hands up to where his belt would be… if he was wearing pants.

“Not unless I want to show up at the station stark naked I can’t,” he muttered. Overalls. Of course he was in fucking overalls.

“At this point, it’s stark naked or not at all, Will, I’d move it if I were you.” Anthony, now. Will opened his mouth to tell him to shut up when he was interrupted by a whistle, loud enough, sharp enough, for all of them to immediately cover their ears.

“Will! *Will*!”

He didn’t know who was calling, if anyone was calling, or if the whistle was drawing phantom voices from Will’s own mind, all he knew was he had to move and he had to move *now.* He kicked at the rail, worked his heel through the pant leg and started to undo the zipper at his chest. His hands were shaking, the zipper wouldn’t move, catching on something Will couldn’t fucking *see* and when he could see it didn’t fucking matter.

He could hear them calling for him now, all of them, voices mingling in the white noise of an oncoming train as he struggled, caught in his clothes and unable to move. He turned over his shoulder to see them, eyes wide, mouths open, panic and horror and fear on their faces; Brian and Anthony doing their best to hold Hannibal back as he tried to move to help.

Too late, though, too late. Not enough time even if he managed to break free now, he was too far from Will and Will just looked at him, for just a moment more, before turning to meet the oncoming headlight, bright as the dawn.

Chapter End Notes

...there's no major character death, y'all ;) and another chapter coming up. *Trust me*.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

> *He'd leaned back against the wall as Anthony found a change of clothes for him, cleaned him up as best he could, pressed their foreheads together and reminded him that they* fucking did it*. Escaped. Made it out. Didn't drown, didn't get shot, didn't get electrocuted… Matthew made a soft sound and stared at the ceiling for a minute, trying to get his emotions under control.*
>
> And so, our Escapists...

Chapter Notes

> This has been a labour of love and I am so glad you joined me on this journey!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

---Brian---

Banff always made Brian feel small, in the best possible way. Staring out over a lake surrounded by mountains with a tin mug of coffee in his hand was his idea of heaven. And the fact that he was back here, with Jimmy pottering about inside the cabin behind him, both with new names, new Canadian papers and an unknown road ahead was more exciting than he could fathom.

He'd climbed onto the platform with the rest of them, shaking from exhaustion, from overwhelm, from what had happened. He'd shoved a shirt on over his overall pants, knotted the sleeves around his middle. To anyone looking, he was a construction worker on his way to a project on the early train. Nothing more, nothing less.

Three days, Anthony had told him, and passed on the code for a locker in Grand Central for Jimmy to go to, to get their papers.

Brian took the second train that came into the station, uncaring for the route. He knew where he was meeting Jimmy, he knew the train system well enough, and he needed time to get himself together.

Three days later they were in New York, Brian sunk low in the passenger seat of their rental and fiddled with his phone as Jimmy went to retrieve whatever Anthony had left for them. There was a part of Brian that thought they'd be duped, that Anthony wouldn't do the drop,

would fuck off to London or wherever and leave him in the lurch. He didn't want to believe it but he'd had enough experience in prison and out of it to suspect that to be the case.

But Dimmond had come through. More than.

He'd even left an ominous sounding note for Brian not to go looking for him, because Anthony would find him first. Brian doubted he'd need to. That part of his life was over.

Now for another three weeks he had Banff. And after that? He'd think about it over coffee.

---Matt---

The first thing Matt did upon reaching the station was throw up, doubled over and shaking as whatever had been in his stomach evacuated over the floor. He drew some looks, sure, but who would go anywhere near a man being sick on the subway at five in the morning? No one in their right fucking mind, that's who.

He'd leaned back against the wall as Anthony found a change of clothes for him, cleaned him up as best he could, pressed their foreheads together and reminded him that they *fucking did it*. Escaped. Made it out. Didn't drown, didn't get shot, didn't get electrocuted… Matthew made a soft sound and stared at the ceiling for a minute, trying to get his emotions under control. He hadn't thought he'd react this way, it was just a fucking prison break. But everything, *everything* that had happened was only just now coming to the surface for him to process.

He and Anthony didn't take a train. Anthony had spoken to Brian and Hannibal and then grabbed Matt by the elbow to lead him up the stairs and out. He remembered a cab ride. He remembered a nondescript building and a lukewarm shower.

When he finally woke up, Anthony told him he'd slept for nearly two days.

His initial plan had been to go after his partner. Get back at him for pulling a stunt like that and not even having the balls to tell Matt about it himself before he'd been transferred out, but he felt so tired now. It felt inconsequential after everything it took to get here. He didn't want to risk being shoved right back into lockup getting revenge on a crook so petty he wasn't even worth the change for a collect call.

Anthony and Matt stayed at the safehouse - Matt didn't ask where and Anthony didn't tell him - until the bruises had eased to yellow smears against Matt's face and he didn't feel like he was swallowing his own teeth when he ate something. He still jerked awake some nights, covered in cold sweat, gasping air as though he was still in that reservoir, the water still rising up and the door not opening, no matter what he did.

Other nights he slept like the dead.

They shared a bed but Anthony didn't touch him unless Matt reached out first. He kept himself busy while Matt healed up and teased him as before, but there seemed to be no overbearing pressure for Matt to put out now that he was free. There hadn't been inside either but… he had to tackle those emotions now, he had to come to terms with the fact that he'd

been very contentedly sleeping with a dandy in his fifties who adored teasing him as much as making love to him.

Matt didn't know what to do with that.

He'd never considered himself queer before.

So one morning he just grabbed Anthony and kissed him, determined to prove to himself that it was the circumstances not the contact that got him off. Four hours later, and half conscious from the most amazing orgasms ever, he decided fuck it with labels, he'd go where Anthony was going.

They went to London, in the end. With new passports and papers, new names and new ages. All for show, of course. Behind closed doors they knew who they were. London satisfied Matt's desperate need for motion and movement, everything was alive in London, some areas never slept, others were so pristine he was scared to get off the tube in case his very presence lowered the property value.

Anthony "worked from home", smoked a pipe - because of course he fucking did, and was always up for a shag regardless of time or - quite honestly - place. It was good. It felt nice. Stable. Fucking normal when they were anything but: a man who didn't exist in love with a man who could walk through walls.

---Hannibal---

Hannibal jolted awake to the sound of a passing train.

It was temporary, of course, this house. He couldn't stay in one place longer than twenty-four hours to avoid police detection. Back to a life of burner phones and cash and single-use visa debits. He rubbed his eyes and rolled over, watching vaguely out the window as clouds gathered for another unremarkable day.

He could still hear the train in the distance, the distinctive *tah-ra tah-ra* pulse as it moved, slowed for a corner, and continued onwards.

It had seemed deafening in the tunnel, an endless rush of beat that just wouldn't end, as the four of them watched in horror and could do nothing at all.

One moment, Will was there, looking at them, turning his head, the next there was just the train and its unwelcome heartbeat. It was still rattling in his ears as Hannibal broke free of the hands holding him and rushed towards where he'd last seen Will.

There was usually little left of train-impact victims. Perhaps some blood, a scrap of clothes, bone matter. Hannibal didn't know what to expect, he didn't even want to look.

"Fuck, oh fuck, oh *fuck*," Will's voice was breathless, shaking, his entire body vibrating in panic as he lay prone and completely flat between the tracks, head turned to the side, fingers digging into the filthy stones beneath his back.

The train had gone over him.

It had gone over him with Will trapped beneath its belly, praying nothing caught against clothes or skin, and nothing had. The train had even severed the pantleg that had caught him in this mess in the first place. Hannibal didn't care for the pain that sang through his knees as he landed on them and bent over Will, turning his face to kiss him. He didn't care how much his side hurt, where the knife had cut and pulled and bled him. He didn't care, because Will was kissing him back and cursing and laughing and clinging to him with dirty oily hands and Hannibal didn't think he would be able to breathe again.

"You react more to that thing than I do," Will mumbled around his toothbrush, leaning in the doorway and looking out the same window Hannibal was.

"I suppose I've associated the sound with a highly traumatic experience,"

Will snorted. "Fuck off."

But it was fond, underneath his teasing and futile attempts to convince Hannibal he was fine, it was so fond. He'd barely been able to walk after that train, legs like jelly and lungs filled with greasy air. But they'd made it; to the platform, to the station, to the train itself. They had the car to themselves and as soon as the train moved they were laughing, hysterical and loud and entirely devoid of joy, but they were laughing.

It was Will who broke into tears first, Hannibal holding him close and kissing his hair, reassuring them that nothing would separate them, not ever again. And Will believed him.

They were in their fifth safehouse now, and were just a few days away from the papers they needed to leave the country. Hannibal still hadn't told Will where they would be going, and he honestly didn't care. He'd miss the dogs, of course, but they were in good hands. In safe hands. Alana wouldn't let anything happen to his animals. They were the only thing tethering him to the United States, in the end, and now…

He climbed back into bed with a grunt and flopped heavy over Hannibal's side, his chin to Hannibal's shoulder.

"Are you scrying in the clouds?" he asked him, eyes down to catch the twitch of Hannibal's smile. "Alright, be secretive. I'll divine on my own."

Hannibal hummed, amused, and turned slowly, careful not to upset Will from his position but adjust so that Will lay over his chest as Hannibal rested on his back.

"I see dogs." Will proclaimed finally, turning to give Hannibal a serious look.

"Dogs?"

"Several." Will nodded. "Mutts, mostly. Rescues. Mismatched and ignored and shoved aside."

"Curious."

"Isn't it?" Will grinned. "What did you see?"

Hannibal licked his lips and narrowed his eyes, considering Will before bringing a hand up to stroke through his hair.

“Dogs,” he admitted with a sigh, and Will’s laugh warmed him to his bones.

Chapter End Notes

A HUGE thank you to everyone who read, commented, left kudos, and fell in love with the characters in this story. I had a great time, I'm so proud of myself for finishing this series when it was entirely unplanned and just ambushed me out of nowhere.

An ENORMOUS fucking on-my-knees THANK to asongtosaygoodbye for being the unofficial beta of basically all my work, but this one in particular. Helping me plan and choreograph action sequences, reading through scenes I was worried were boring and leaving the most encouraging comments to keep me going. Not only that but he made Escapists into a playlist! Guh!

End Notes

A prison AU based VERY VAGUELY on The Escapist (2008) (as in, note no major character death) let's see how it plays out.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!